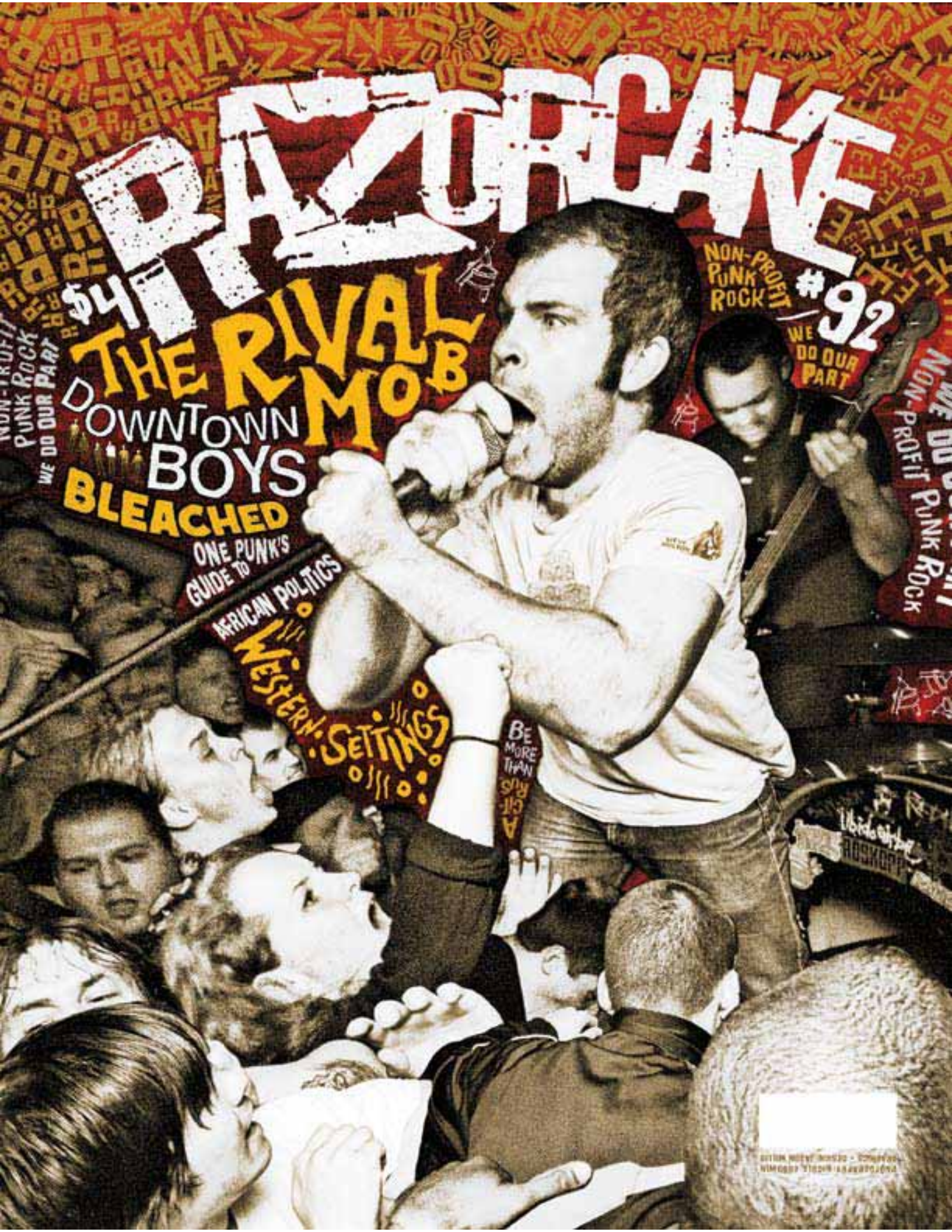
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Razorcake started as a magazine. Since then it has grown to be so much more. We've been described as a "vital scene organ" and we take that as a compliment, and we take it very seriously. Stuck between a brutal popularity contest that has been ravaging the scene for decades, and the forgotten forest of obscurity, we're dedicated to covering bands and artists that we feel are interested in helping foster their community. Those looking for another stepping stone can keep moving.

We're not for hire, and we're not for sale.

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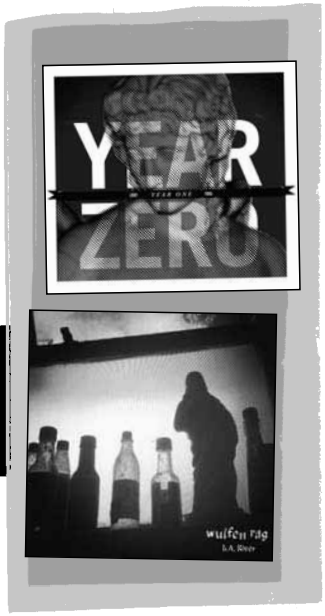

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Cliffs and Bridges

My brother and I jumped off a lot of cliffs as kids. Most of my memories revolve around Lake Mead. Dad usually checked the depth before we leapt; made sure it was safe, pointed out potential hazards. There's nothing to cliff jumping. Just run until land gives way, enjoy the trip down, and put your feet together right before you hit the water so you don't get punched in the crotch with a fist of water. It gave me a boost that there'd occasionally be teenagers much older than my brother and I deliberating at the edge of the cliff, bolstering their courage. My brother and I, two scrawny kids, quietly passed them and jumped. No hesitation.

Looking back, it was the trip down that was my favorite part. The joyous weightlessness. The quiet inside a rushing tunnel of air. The hyper reality of the moment; a feeling only felt in short bursts of time. I felt super alive. There was fear, but it was bundled so tightly with exhilaration that it wasn't crippling.

I didn't sleep well for several months earlier this year. I could fall asleep easily enough, but couldn't stay down. It was 3:30 AM. I got on my bike and rode without a plan. I ended up on a nearby bridge. It was lit. I took off my helmet. I turned off my front and back lights. There are little alcoves with benches. I took off my cycling shoes so I wouldn't slip. I climbed over a low metal fence. I sat on the concrete ledge and looked down. I dangled my feet over the edge. I felt the cool breeze. I paid attention to my breathing.

I sat there for a long time. I wept. I held onto the bridge with both hands. Thoughts came in waves. It's a strange, disorienting feeling—knowing thoughts aren't your own, but they're huge, inside your head, knocking you about.

A dot of light in the middle distance lit up a river rock building in an orange cone of light. It was the place I officiated a wedding several months before. The place hadn't been open; we'd technically been trespassing. There were only six of us. I read a bit of a Neruda poem as part of the brief ceremony. It was tender and personal and beautiful. I watched darkness slowly being replaced by suggestions of light.

Invisible-to-the-eyes ribbons wrapped around me. Anchored me to the bridge. All of my family. Their unconditional love. All of my close friends. Their constant check-ins. Not feeling alive is different than wanting to be dead. I thought of my buddies Chris Pepus and Travis Fristoe who took their lives and how sad I still am. How much I miss them; how I think I understand the level of pain it took to end their lives. It's far beyond rational thinking, beyond words. How I don't want to join them any time soon.

I don't know if there's life after this one. But I do know that there are people in this one who care so much for me. Want me healthy and alive and in their lives. Who want me here, today and tomorrow. The feeling is mutual. I stood up, carefully climbed back over the fence, put my shoes and helmet on, got back on my bike, rode home, made a cup of coffee, and watched the sun fully rise.

Today, I'm amongst the living, one grain of sand at a time, maintaining that balance of light over darkness.

–Todd Taylor

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I don't blame you for needing something to believe, but give me hands that help instead of lips that pray. **–ONSIND, "*God Hates Facts*"**

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Tim Beaty

Photo by Patrick Houdek

Tim Beaty was shot and killed, the tragic result of a fight in a neighboring house. Two people ran to Tim's house for help to escape the gunshots. Tim shielded them by laying on top of them on the floor. He was fatally wounded. A trust has been set up to help with Tim's five year old son's future. Donations can be made at http://beatytrust.com

THANK YOU: *"Be more than a wiseass" thanks to Jason Willis for the cover design, and yeah, I know his head really isn't that large, but we're going for impact—like "it's gonna explode!"—thanks to Nicole Goodwin for the cover photo; No jokes, all respect to Jackie Rusted's illo. in Donna's column; Annie is an unflappable reading machine thanks to Becky Rodriquez for her illo. in Jim's column; "What's your price for flight"? that shit hit number one in Canada thanks to Steve Thueson for his illo. in Cassie's column; Hey, hey, no. Oh, those are just joker tassels on Harley Quinn thanks to Alex Barrett for his illo. in Nørb's column; The rich marble of sounds that is the font of gloriousness of the Ramones lovingly realized by Bill Pinkel, Esquire. Dale thanks you for his illo.; Dr. Surgeon, I know very little about medical science, but if you could put some lightning bolts in the Chicken's spine when you're in there, I'd appreciate it thanks to Ryan Gelatin for his illo.; Sometimes, you'd just want to go for drugs instead of hugs thanks to Mitch Clem and Nation of Amanda for the illo. in Indiana Laub's debut print column; Strong, direct, informative, and readable instead of pedantic, jargon-filled, and bloated—is that Razorcakey enough for you? Thanks to Kevin Dunn, Art Fuentes, and Madeline Bridenbaugh for a monster task pulled off with style for "One Punk's Guide to African Politics"; Jean jacket, no pants thanks to Kat Jetson, Meztli Hernandez, Debi Del Grande, and Dylan Davis for the Bleached interview, photos, and layout; Whenever I hit the button on a hand dryer, the wavy lines representing hot air remind me of bacon thanks to Madeline Bridenbaugh, Rachel Murray Framingheddu, and Eric Baskauskas for the Western Settings interview, photos, and layout; This could have been an epic interview about West Coast versus East Coast… bubble tea vs. boba thanks to Madeline Bridenbaugh, Todd Pollock, Nicole Goodwin, and Danielle Parsons for the Rival Mob interview and photos; In McAllen, TX cars are X-rayed to see if anyone's hidden in them when crossing the border thanks to Madeline Bridenbaugh, Meztli Hernandez, and Lauren Measure for the Downtown Boys interview, photos, and layout.*

"The drums go POUND POUND POUND and the guitar goes GNAW GNAW GNAW." –Rev Nørb reviewing Angry Cougars' self-titled LP. ***Thanks to 91's rotation of music, zines, books, and video reviewers: Candace Hansen, Becky Rodriguez, Kayla Greet, Art Ettinger, Jackie Rusted, Craven Rock, Rich Cocksedge, Keith Rosson, MP Johnson, Matt Seward, Juan Espinosa, Ty Stranglehold, Garrett Barnwell, Sean Arenas, Kurt Morris, Mike Frame, Chris Terry, Ryan Nichols, Indiana Laub, Jimmy Alvarado, Camylle Reynolds, Sean Koepenick, Tim Brooks, Matt Werts, The Lord Kveldulfr, Nørb, Kelley O'Death, Steve Adamyk, Ian Wise, Jon Mule, Chad Williams, Sal Lucci, Jim Joyce, Michael T. Fournier, Jim Woster, Adrian Salas, and Tricia Ramos.***

If you're a woman who is knowledgeable about DIY punk, are good with deadlines, and are open to the editorial process, this is an open invitation to drop us a line about doing reviews, interviews, articles, or a webcolumn for Razorcake. Even with a moratorium on adding any new male reviewers to our roster for almost two years, that section is far from gender parity. Please help us out. (razorcake.org/contact-us)

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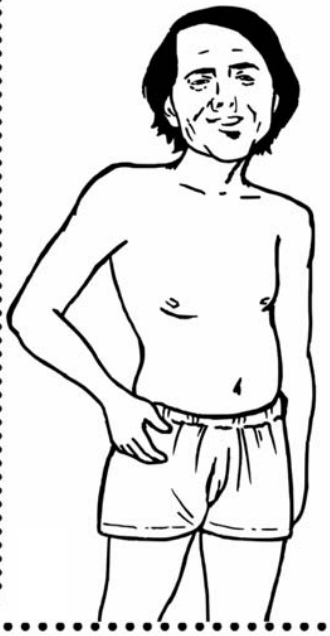

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The following folks stepped forward to help us do our part over the past two months. Without their help, Razorcake wouldn't be what it is:
Todd Taylor, Daryl Gussin, Sean Carswell, Skinny Dan, Katy Spining, Candice Tobin, Kari Hamanaka, Matthew Hart, Donna Ramone, Rishbha Bhagi, Madeline Bridenbaugh, Chris Baxter, Phill Legault, Steve Couch, Robert El Diablo, Mark McBride, James Hernandez, Alice Bag, Marty Ploy, Rachel Murray Framingheddu, Rene Navarro, Billy Kostka III, Derek "Sweet Potato with Sea Salt" Whipple, Jason Willis, Janeth Galaviz, Adrian Chi, Megan Pants, Jimmy Alvarado, Matt Average, Ever Velasquez, Joe Dana, Christina Zamora, Juan Espinosa, Meztli Hernandez, Sean Arenas, Aaron Kovacs, Julia Smut, Jenn Witte, Dave Eck, Tim Burkert, Jeff Proctor, Nighthawk, Josh Rosa, Toby Tober, Sal Lucci, Jennifer Federico, Jennifer Whiteford, Kayla Greet, Marcos Siref, Steve Thueson, Evan Wolff, Cassie J. Sneider, Bill Pinkel, Kurt Morris, Vee Liu, Laura Collins, Eric Baskauskas, Bianca, Rhea Tepp, Russ Van Cleave, John Di Marco, Michael T. Fournier, Samantha Mc Bride, Simon Sotelo, Susan de Place, Bryan Static, John Miskelly, Jamie L. Rotante, Genesis Bautista, Andy Garcia, Camylle Reynolds, Becky Bennett, Craven Rock, Replay Dave, Adam Ali, Matt Sweeting, Chris Devlin, Codey Richards, Ryan Nichols, Aimee Pijpers, Liz Mayorga, Brad Dwyer, MP Johnson, Mor Fleisher, Ryan Leach, Tim Brooks, Patrick Houdek, Louis Jacinto, Chris Boarts Larson, J.V. McDonough, Isaac Thotz, Kat Jetson, Noah Wolf, Cahnie Galletta, Jon Mule, Chris Terry, Ryan Gelatin, Rosie Gonce, Alex Cady, Aaron Zonka, Rick V., Kelly O'Grady, Pete Stapleton, Rachel Gouk, Alex Harris, Rodrigo V., Jack Fallows, Cathy Hannah, Sam Grinberg, Lukas Myhan, Jim Kettner, Ollie Mikse, Dylan Davis, Becky Rodriguez, Gabby Gonzalez, Keith Rosson, Megan Razzetti, Paul Silver, Julie A. Ferguson, Matt Werts, Stacy Medina, David Ensminger, Kristen Thomas-Pedler, Danny Rust, Daisy, and Erin Schultz.

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I encounter racism every single stupid day.

Halal Atcha Grrrl

It's an unfortunate travesty racism isn't something I can punch in its fucking face and be over with. Over a year ago, I wrote "9/11, Never Let Me Forget," an article for *Razorcake* about the weird racism I encountered growing up an Arab Muslim in California (it is still up on Razorcake.org if you search for it). I wrote about Islamophobia using personal stories and humor, so people within our DIY community would be more aware of what it's like to exist in my skin. The next time I stopped by Razorcake HQ, an anonymous letter was waiting for me. It contained a page from some Nationalist rag that had reprinted a speech about removing "monsters" from European nations (the monsters being Muslims). There were a couple randomly highlighted sentences and underlined words. Around the skewed statistic of "55% of all Dutch favor a total ban on Muslim immigration" came the sender's only written note: "Our numbers are growing. We are winning."

Discussing my adolescence had resulted in hate mail; that's how little Muslims are truly understood and respected in America. Islam isn't some scary, violent, woman-hating cult out of the dark deserts of Saudi Arabia. It's practiced by twenty-three percent of the world—that's nearly one in every four people. But in the states, the number of Muslims is less than one percent of the population, just under two million people. The vast majority of those people are immigrants—the rest are often the children of immigrants—and they come from every corner of the globe. I'm from the Arabian red tea-drinking, loud, and generous corner, but someone else might be from the Chinese green tea-drinking, humble, and determined corner. How Islam is translated between countries can be vastly different; in Northern India, a colorful, mystical Sufi celebration takes place, while simultaneously I'm stuck in a convention center in Ontario, Calif., bored and ignoring a lecture on the evils of premarital relations. In the same way one can culturally identify as Jewish, Muslim lives are ingrained with so much more than religious teachings. It's a huge, diverse, all-encompassing culture that's bigger than the faith itself, and the majority of the people surrounding me have no clue how beautiful it all is.

Regrettably, that's not what America currently understands Islam to be. Without any personal contact, it would seem there are only Arabic-speaking Muslim men who murder white Americans, while their subjugated hijab-wearing wife helps. That's a scary picture painted for someone who has never visited Cairo or eaten baklava. And that fear sells. It makes news outlets millions in ad revenue because when the news is sensational, it is entertaining. But that sensation and money has a severe cost at many people's expense.

I encounter racism every single stupid day. It's like a hammer slamming down on an unsuspecting finger: comments on my friends' Facebook pages, off-hand remarks by people near me, shirts people proudly wear in public, a real shitty new *X-Files* episode. Unless I seal shut my eyes and ears, that hammer will find me and remind me there are people out there who hate me enough to throw me out of my home.

As the presidential race continues, the candidates and news anchors repeatedly mention what needs to be done about Muslims. They can't use another word that doesn't implicate 1.6 billion human beings, turning their identity into an insult? Hey GOP, think you can get the fear votes without promising people you plan to monitor me and my neighborhood? Racist white America may feel safer but now I'm terrified—aren't I part of America, too?

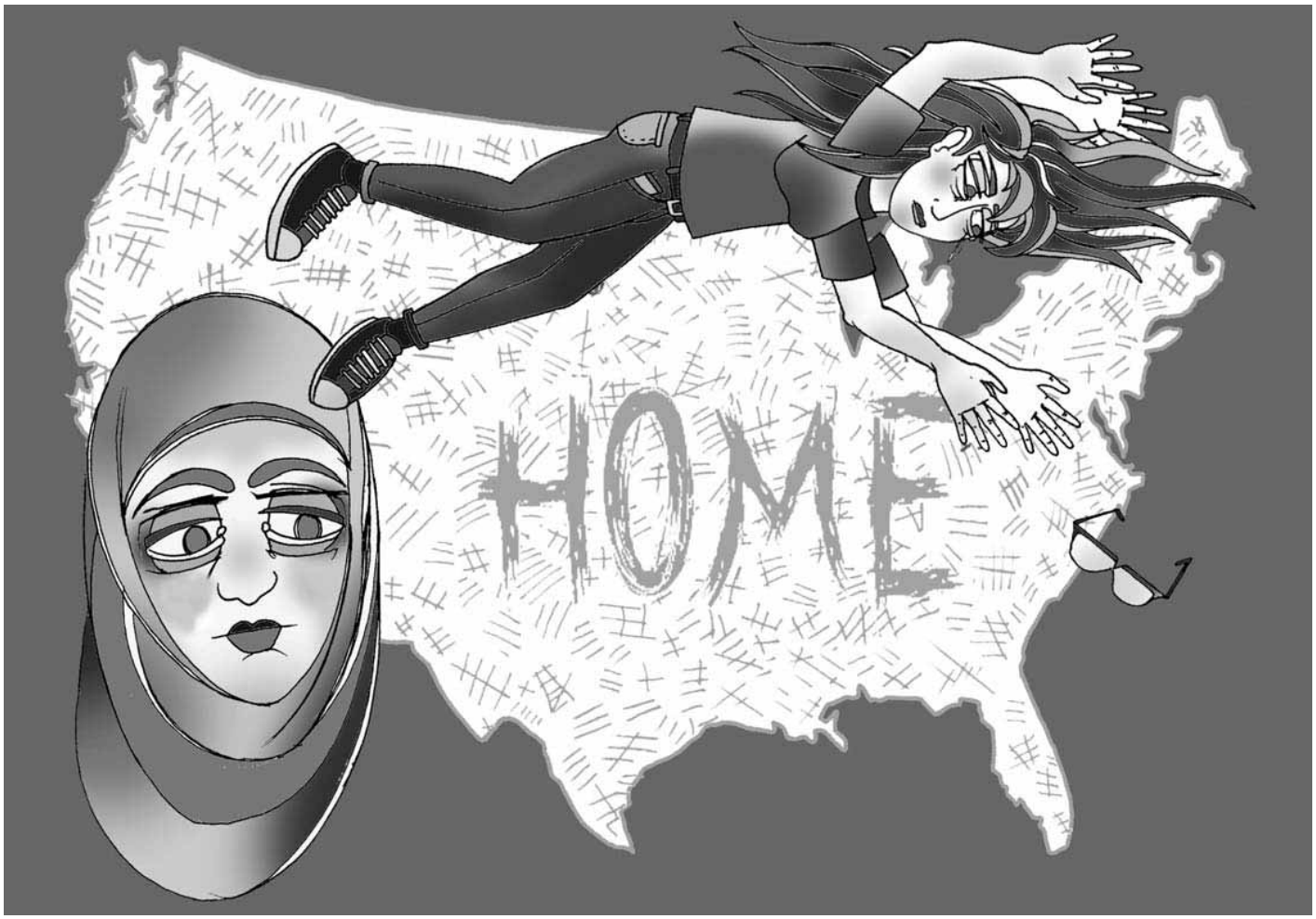
It's difficult to describe how it feels to be the target of racism or xenophobia to someone who has never experienced it. One moment, I'm weighing the pros and cons of doing my laundry. The next, I see or hear something that references me and my entire family in a terribly hateful way. Emotions fire wildly, and I'm gripped by fight-or-flight. I'm momentarily frozen in an overwhelming mix of panic, fear, sadness, hurt, anger, and intense pain. Then, slowly, reason floats in. I shake it off and try to let it fade. But it always leaves a tiny cut. That's genuinely what it feels like over time: death from a thousand cuts.

Those tiny cuts come from everyone; the attacks on Paris and Brussels brought out some selective sympathy I wasn't ready for. Where was this reaction for Lebanon, Nigeria, Turkey, Pakistan, and Syria? My friends repeatedly screamed, "Fuck religion," as their stance against terrorism, and that hurt, too. Blaming religion means inherently blaming Islam for those actions. Power begets violence begets power. "Religion is the source of all violence" is a fucking ignorant statement; insisting all violence is religiously based is a terribly shortsighted and unfair thing to assume. Your church-going grandma would be ashamed. Atheism doesn't give an opinion any more validity, it forces the narrative that your ethnocentrism is right and Muslims are wrong. And if you truly believe that, fuck you and your privilege.

When news of the shooting in San Bernardino first broke, my brother and I anxiously texted each other. "Please don't be Muslim," we both pleaded to the Patron Saint of Racist Backlash. We do this every time any news of violence trickles in, and we know the drill when the suspect is Muslim. "The drill" for me is staying the hell away from the Internet for a week and waiting at least a month before flying to visit my parents (just being Muslim still puts you on the FBI terror suspect list. The leaked Snowden documents showed FBI training materials liked to use the fake name of "Mohammed Raghead"). I'll see a lot of incredibly hateful comments and occasional threats of genocide if I don't do the drill. In one case, I suffered great humility when my crotch and butt were groped by the TSA and tested for explosive material in the middle of a crowded airport. For clarity: my vagina was tested for explosives.

In January, a co-worker and I were making small talk when he asked my race. He then giggled and said, "Heh, don't kill me." He genuinely thought that was an appropriate and humorous response. That evening I went to see Mick Foley, wrestling legend and Santa Claus advocate, on his speaking tour. The event was held at a comedy club, with a local opener by the name of Marcus the Comedian. Marcus says, "So I was getting on a plane, right?" and every single muscle in my body tensed. I knew exactly where this unoriginal, racist, poor man's Dane Cook was going. The punch line was "Don't let someone named Mahmood on my plane!" and the room erupted with laughter. Like a ripped bag of groceries, my emotions tore through and spilled out. I doubled over, face in my hands, and I started sobbing. It's the kind of crying where you're so overwrought with emotion you can no longer hold yourself upright and your face and clothing get soaked. In a sea of two hundred white people laughing, I was drowning.

Marcus the "comedian" then did a wildly offensive impression of what Arabic sounds like, and an ululation. Ululation is name of the



JACKIE RUSTED

In a sea of two hundred white people laughing, I was drowning.

loud, long high-pitched call where someone moves his or her tongue and uvula quickly. Written out it would be something like, "Leeleeleeleelee!" That's what women like myself do at Arab celebrations, especially weddings and graduations. It's a special thing a woman does when they're really happy for someone. If you think it's also a battle cry, that's just the racism of western pop culture hard at work.

I had no idea what to do besides cry. I felt so defeated. Later I did something I hadn't done in years: I called my mom. "Don't listen to any of it!" she resolutely told me in her signature angry tone. "Stop crying. Don't be weak—*be strong! Fight!*" So here I am, fighting by trying to force the world to understand my experience. Explaining how hard it is to go outside some days because I'm scared my face will give me away and someone will try and hurt me. Talking about how my family has an escape plan to leave the country if things get too dangerous for us to live here. Describing how, at thirty-two years old, I've experienced for the first time what it's like to see myself positively represented in pop culture through the comic book *Ms. Marvel*. Admitting how I sit and cry after every issue because I can't emotionally handle it. These experiences are important for anyone to recognize if they sincerely want to understand my struggle.

All I ask of everyone reading this is simple: *listen*. Take the back fucking seat for once in your honky-ass life, keep your opinions in your goddamn pocket, and just *listen*. If you have a question, ask politely but give others the podium. It meant so much to me that Andrew Jackson Jihad changed their terrible band name. It irks me when I see art of a woman in a niqab holding a large gun. It was incredibly difficult to relive those painful moments and write this column. It doesn't matter what poorly translated Qur'an verse you saw online, or what you think "sharia law" means, or even your opinion on the cultural practice of wearing a hijab—because your opinion doesn't fucking matter when it's someone else's life.

A life someone may try to take because they just couldn't listen.

–Donna Ramone

I don't blast punk rock at ear-splitting volumes in the car anymore.

Music Lessons: *Coming to Grips with My Daughter's Music Interests*

When I was a kid, my parents volunteered our house to a loose group of traditional Irish musicians for the purpose of holding music lessons. My parents wanted me and my three siblings to learn how to play Irish music, and for a while we went with this scheme—except we each wanted to play different instruments. Rather than try to coordinate lessons with different teachers at different times, my parents convinced the instructors to come to us. The musicians saved money on renting a practice space and they were encouraged to invite other students to our house.

For several years Wednesday night was Irish music night at the Ruland household. My brother took lessons in the concertina in the basement, the older of my two sisters took up the tin whistle in the living room, and my mother screeched her way through fiddle lessons in the kitchen. I signed up for the bodhrán, which is a goatskin war drum. When that proved to be too difficult, I switched to the tin whistle, a simple instrument with six holes and a fixed mouthpiece one plays in the style of a recorder. At the end of the night, we all gathered together for a jam session called a céili.

My siblings and I had a distinct advantage over the other students in that we were also members of an Irish dance school that competed all over the Eastern seaboard, and thus knew many of the songs we were being taught to play. We certainly knew the difference between a jig and a reel, a hornpipe and a slow air. Yet I never learned to read music. I knew that the notes on the lines of sheet music were EGBDF (Every Good Boy Does Fine) and the notes in between the lines were FACE, but I was never able to put it together. Nor was I the kind of musician who could play by ear. In fact, I wasn't any kind of musician at all.

I memorized the notes on the corresponding finger holes of the tin whistle (DEFGABC, et cetera) and would transpose the notation on the sheet music into letters. I never cracked the code that allowed me to look at a piece of sheet music and hear the song in my head.

Learning how to play music this way is like learning how to ride a bike without ever figuring out the mechanics of cranking the pedals. In other words, I coasted.

* * *

Shortly after her eleventh birthday, my daughter Annie started to play the flute. She attends a public school where music instruction is part of the curriculum (mainly because the teacher's salary is paid for with money donated by parents and the school's alumni community, but that's another story). For four days a week she receives lessons and participates in the school band and orchestra.

She learned how to read music immediately. There was never a time when she was learning how to read music. One day she didn't know how to do it, and then one day she did, which blew me away.

There was never any doubt there would come a day when my daughter would learn to do things I can't do. However, I was hoping this day would come when she was a bit closer to adulthood.

One day I was walking by her room while she was practicing and she was jamming out the theme music to *Star Wars*. My heart soared. She was having a hell of a lot more fun than I did when I was learning "The Galway Bell" or "The Fisherman's Waltz."

On another occasion she was playing something that sounded familiar, but I couldn't quite place the song. I realized it was a Beatles song (at least I think it was a Beatles song) and when I asked her about it, she wasn't sure either. In other words, she was learning to play a song she'd never heard before. This is what musical notation is for: it preserves centuries of music from back when there were no recording devices. Sheet music *was* the recording device.

But for me, music is something you feel first and emulate afterwards. Can you imagine learning how to play a punk song in this fashion? Plinking and plunking through the notes until you get them in the right order at the right tempo in the right way? That, to me, feels very remote from music's purpose.

* * *

Like many parents, I've endured my daughter's musical passions, from "Wheels on the Bus" to the Wiggles. There was a particularly dark period when her favorite band was Imagine Dragons, but it could have been much, much worse. As her mother pointed out, at least they play guitars.

I've tried to lure her over to punk rock, but she's not having it. There's a game I play in the car where I'll be jamming out to something really fast and loud, with the emphasis on loud, and my daughter will say something I don't quite hear and I'll say, "What's that? Turn it up?" And then I'll jack up the volume.

This has not been very persuasive.

She recently told me that sometimes when I'm listening to music she doesn't like she'll tell me long stories about her day just so that I'll turn off the music. I confess: a tiny part of me died when she told me that.

* * *

With a year of instruction in the flute under her belt and performances in the school band and the district's honor band—as well as a trip to band camp—she has added a new instrument (the trumpet) and a new musical obsession: 2cellos.

2cellos is a musical group that consists of two classically trained cellists from Eastern Europe who happen to be very good looking.

Interesting.

They are the self-styled "bad boys" of cello because they play energetic covers of songs by Guns N' Roses, Coldplay, and Nirvana, and an album's worth of AC/DC songs.

After Annie told me about them we went online and watched their video for "Thunderstruck," which is quite good, with a fresh take on a familiar theme. The setting is a ballroom in the seventeenth century with men in wigs and women in ball gowns; it's a very genteel setting. The brothers sit down and begin to play their music, which gets increasingly rowdy. The old farts in the audience are outraged; the young women aroused. You've seen versions of this video a million times before.

What was interesting to me is that while these musicians were clearly talented, my enjoyment came from knowing that it was a cover of an AC/DC song that had occupied some part of my adolescent imagination. Hearing a fresh spin on something so familiar was what made it interesting. That's what cover bands are *for*. A truly great cover song powers up our nostalgia in the video game of life.

Annie, of course, had no idea who AC/DC was. So I clicked over to AC/DC and we watched the original music video. I told her

BECKY RODRIGUEZ | INK-SKETCH.TUMBLR.COM

There was never any doubt there would come a day when my daughter would learn to do things I can't do. I was hoping this day would come when she was a bit closer to adulthood.

about Bon Scott's gravelly voice and Angus Young's schoolboy routine and we were both entertained. It was really cool watching videos that spanned decades, continents, and generations.

We spent well over an hour this way. We watched a 2cellos video for Guns N' Roses' "Welcome to the Jungle" and then watched the original video, which I'd watched a million times in the enlisted club on the navy base in San Diego when Axl and Slash took mainstream rock'n'roll by the throat. We did the same for Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit," followed immediately by Weird Al's parody, which is in many ways better—at least my daughter thought so and I can't say I disagree.

It was a deeply satisfying way to spend the afternoon. If I'd played these videos for her without any context she would have been as bored as I would have been if my parents had forced me to listen to the Dubliners, the Clancy Brothers, and the Chieftains, although I guess they did by force-feeding us a musical diet of jigs and reels. It helps that 2cellos—despite their stupid name—are really good, and entertaining to watch.

Still, there's a part of me that wonders what my daughter's response to 2cellos would be if they were dorky kids from Tallahassee or Taiwan and not these ruggedly good-looking dudes from Croatia and Slovenia. Perhaps that's a conversation for when 2cellos comes to town later this month….

* * *

I don't blast punk rock at ear-splitting volumes in the car anymore. Now we talk about things we both love, like books and sports and chicken wings. I haven't given up hope that she'll eventually come around. That said, she doesn't really have the disposition for it. She's a really chill kid who very rarely blows her stack, and if I had to choose between having a daughter who listens to punk rock and the sweet young woman that Annie is becoming—and in many ways has always been—then I'd choose the latter.

However, the trumpet has me worried. It's only a matter of time before she gets exposed to ska, but it sure as hell won't be from me.

–Jim Ruland

MY SEVENTY-FIFTH COLUMN FOR RAZORCAKE BY BEN SNAKEPIT

AN EXCITING STORY OF...
my FIRST Job
WHEN I WAS 16, I GOT A JOB AT PIZZA HUT.
PIZZA HUT
I WAS A BUSBOY AND A DISHWASHER.
AS WELL AS OCCASIONAL CUSTODIAN.
WET FLOOR
ONE FRIDAY NIGHT, DURING A PARTICULARLY BUSY RUSH...
HEY BEN!
A CUSTOMER TELLS ME THERE'S SOME SORT OF TROUBLE IN THE MEN'S RESTROOM. I NEED YOU TO TAKE CARE OF IT!
I BRACED MYSELF AND OPENED THE BATHROOM DOOR.
ULP!
MEN
..SOMEBODY HAD POOPED IN THE URINAL.
OH GROSS!
I PUT ON RUBBER GLOVES AND GRABBED A FISTFUL OF PAPER TOWELS.
I SCOOPED IT UP AND FLUSHED IT DOWN THE TOILET.
TRY NOT TO PUKE
UGH! BLARF!
I SCRUBBED THE URINAL DOWN WITH BLEACH.
THEN I WENT BACK TO BUSSING TABLES.

BEN SNAKEPIT@GMAIL.COM

Shanty Cheryl's Photo Page

Meat Market

Optimism in the face of a bad idea.

Motorin'

I hadn't thought it through when I volunteered myself to DJ a five-hour, all-vinyl happy hour. I had just broken up with my boyfriend and it seemed like a good first step into putting on pants, leaving the house, and experiencing the sun again. This kind of optimism in the face of a bad idea was part of a pre-therapy, magical thinking where I believed I could affirm my way through most problems with a, *"Life loves me,"* or an, *"I am a money magnet,"* muttered under my breath at the right time. Any new-agey tendencies I had exploded when I bought my roommate Miss Cleo tarot cards. Over a short course of time, our living situation devolved into a series of daily tarot card readings where our lives were dictated by television's most famous, ambiguously Caribbean psychic.

"Hmmm," Rosco said after he laid the cards out in the clear spot on our dining room table. The Tower. Two of Swords. Ten of Swords. "Maybe you can just move your arms around a lot but really just play off of an iPod?"

"Well, there is that baby DJ school. How hard could it be?" I gestured to the flyer I had found a few months before and had immediately magnetted to our refrigerator. "TEACH YOUR BABY TO DJ!" the postcard advertised, showing a walking-age infant at a turntable in massive headphones. There are times when you are living in a city of the SuperRich™ where you can ignore the class divide as you are counting your quarters and dragging a bag of your underwear and socks to the laundromat. There are other times when you find a postcard adverting something as excessive and extravagant as a baby DJ school that you want to throw a brick through every window you see. This was one of those times.

"It can't be that hard," Rosco said, restacking the deck and putting away the cards.

I took one last look at The Tower as it was swept up in Rosco's hands. "Yeah. Maybe."

What worried me was that although I had been collecting records my entire life, they were mostly from dollar bins and yard sales, and therefore everything I owned skipped at least twice, regardless of how many layers of protective sleeves shielded them from the elements of my apartment. Anytime I splurged on something new, within days it sounded like it had been used in an Ultimate Frisbee tournament between people vying for the record of World's Longest Nails.

I was in no way equipped to provide five hours of continuous music without embarrassing myself, but optimism prevailed. Since breaking up with my boyfriend, I left the house so rarely that the accidental sunlight I experienced as I walked to the bodega just to feel alive was beginning to hurt. I had also been too depressed to eat, so starvation was giving me a sense of euphoric weightlessness, like I was wearing moonshoes and could probably even successfully perform open-heart surgery should I choose to leave the apartment.

Rosco got up and started his daily routine of stress-cleaning the bathtub. I went to my room to cull through my record collection. I realized I should probably check for scratches, so I did that thing that I had only seen very lonely, weird men doing in record stores where they hold the record up to the sky like some kind of burnt offering to the God of Light and then scrutinize it with the paranoia of someone looking for bedbug droppings on a hotel mattress. Even then, it was impossible to tell what would actually play.

For all of my trashed records, luckily I had the world's largest collection of never-listened-to seven inches. In my twenties, I was on a hot streak of making out with older rock dudes, and one of the benefits was that they usually sent me off in a cab with a goodie bag of pins and records, like some kind of fucked-up third grade Halloween party, but with erectile dysfunction and apologies. They gave me these singles like disabled veterans give out red paper flowers on Memorial Day, and I never had the heart to sell them. A part of me felt like if I did, my exes would rapidly age and turn into skeletons then dust like an episode of *Amazing Stories*. Maybe these untouched 45s would finally come in handy.

***

When I was younger and cared more, I used to wear dresses and skirts. Years of street harassment and the stress of unwanted comments from men I don't know have lead to a new reality where I usually dress like I just got released from county lockup for throwing a chair in a blackout. I am most comfortable this way, mostly because I feel like if I actually needed to throw a chair at someone, I would already be primed and ready to go. I've never been one for spikes or studs, but being a dirtbag with crazy eyes is its own sort of armor.

For some reason, I decided to wear a dress and heels to the DJ gig. I was unable to think far enough into the future to imagine how badly my size ten feet would hurt from so many hours of standing. Instead, the idea of masquerading for a while in girl-drag in the Peach Pit After Dark of my own life pulled me to the neglected Try-to-Look-Nice-Will-Ya area of my closet. I put on a dress that was so small that eating a Triscuit would have split the seams like I was avenging my father in a Bruce Lee movie. I put on heels that made me a six-foot-tall predator, kissed my dog, and wheeled my records to the club.

"Do you have headphones?" Kirk, my bartender buddy, asked me. I had left my real headphones at home, neglecting the first rule of DJing, which is to put one hand over one earpiece and act like you are really feeling the music at all times.

"Uh. No. Well, sort of. I left them at home. I have my iPod headphones, though."

Kirk looked at me skeptically. "That'll do. You see that guy at the end of the bar?" He pointed to the only other person in the bar: an older man drinking whiskey and staring into middle distance.

"Yeah?" I pulled out a box of 45s.

"That's Malcolm and Angus Young's brother."

"That guy?" I looked at him again. "No pressure, I guess."

Kirk picked one of my ex-boyfriend's singles out of the pile. "This one's great. Anyway, let me know if you need a drink or anything." He disappeared behind the bar and I got to work. The room slowly filled with cool-looking strangers. Within an hour, it started to look like a *Law & Order* scene involving an indie-rocker falling down an elevator shaft. Ordinarily, I would feel inadequate being surrounded by attractive, upwardly mobile young people. This time was different, though. Nothing was skipping. My transitions were seamless. I was a *party master.*

STEVE THUESON

Being a dirtbag with crazy eyes is its own sort of armor.

I was playing "Hair of the Dog" when Andy walked in wearing a Nazareth shirt. The first time I met him, I was about to go onstage at a Dwarves show in a KISS costume. I noticed that there was a handful of exes in the audience and felt weird about the possibility of a wardrobe malfunction.

"Is there any electrical tape back here?" I had asked, rooting around in a drawer.

"What for?" Andy asked, his voice tires on gravel.

"Well, I'm afraid one of my boobs might come out of this thing and there are a bunch of people here I used to date."

"Well, if everyone's already seen what you got, then what's the problem?" The logic was so simple, it was almost Confucian. Andy wasn't just a big, sweaty biker—he was a philosopher.

"Hey, 'Hair of the Dog'!" he said, opening his denim vest and pointing at his shirt. Was this what acceptance felt like? Had I somehow ascended to another plane of existence through hope and meditation and the fact that I had been listening to "Love Hurts" alone in the dark on repeat every day for a month?

"Yeah, man!" I said, gave a thumbs up, and pretended to be busy. It is one thing to concentrate on seeming cool and like you have it together. It's quite another to have a conversation and coordinate your cool movements so that you don't accidentally bump the turntable and destroy the hearing of fifty people.

Before I noticed, my time came to a close and the next DJ came in. He seemed to know what he was doing, or at the very least he was confidently pretending he knew what he was doing as he fussed with the setup and I put away my records.

"I'm gonna get a drink," he said and walked away. My last record was spinning—"Gudbuy T' Jane" off *Slayed?*—and I realized we were on the last chorus. I looked at Confident DJ Guy, talking to Kirk at the bar as time wound down. I was going to have to put something else on, but the only thing that wasn't packed away was my iPod. The problem there was that the only songs on my iPod are ones that I have listened to on repeat trying to learn them for karaoke. As a karaoke host, my to-do list often has "Learn the Humpty Dance" right under "Buy dog food." I scrolled: Arrested Development, Billy Squier, Cher, The Del Rubio Triplets.

"Oh, god. Everything sucks!" I thumbed through the rest of the alphabet until I finally saw what felt like a good song to close out my last remaining moments of feeling cool. This could do it. It was impossible to hear this song and not imagine yourself driving away from your hometown in a Chrysler Sebring convertible with the fringe of your leather jacket lifting in the wind.

"SISTER CHRISTIAN, OH THE TIME HAS COME."

But, it turns out I was the only one who had that kind of powerful fantasy about "Sister Christian."

Every person in the bar grumbled and ten people went out to smoke cigarettes at the same time. I had killed it, my one chance at being seen and accepted. Confident DJ Guy came back and immediately switched over to his records.

"Thanks," I said, and he shrugged his shoulders, putting his right hand over a headphone, pretending to be immersed in the music. A professional.

I said goodbye to Kirk and rolled my suitcase outside past the crowd of smokers. Andy stopped me.

"Hey, that was pretty good." He patted me on the back. "Except for Night Ranger."

"Who knew?" I said.

He lit another cigarette. "Everyone."

–Cassie J. Sneider

GO WHITE BRONCO
***POPULATION: GHOST TOWN* LP**
Five years in the making, *Population: Ghost Town* is the first LP from Long Island lifer-band Go White Bronco. A lineup of musicians culled from 20-year collaborators and friends from local bands like Iron Chic, Fellow Project, Deep Pockets, Splurge, and Ancient Tongue, this nine track debut full length is a mostly bleak, sometimes triumphant existential meditation led by three acoustic guitars, crushing lyrics, and soaring multi-part harmonies. Crosby, Stills, Hash, and Old.

BOILERMAN
***FEEL WAYS ABOUT STUFF* LP/CD**
With four EPs, an LP, and a slew of cassettes and compilations released since their 2010 demo, Boilerman has played over 170 shows across the US and Canada. The band's sophomore full length is 12 new songs using a sonic pallet drawn as much from bands like Leatherface and Articles of Faith as it is contemporaries like Canadian Rifle, Tenement, and Witches with Dicks. The album is rounded out by a faithful cover of The Mice's 1986 "Not Proud Of The USA" and illustrations by Shannon Thompson.

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DO YOU REMEMBER BATTLE UNICRON

IN THE WINTER OF 2001 WE WERE READING THE SCENE TITLES ON THE TRANSFORMERS DVD.

ONE OF THOSE SHOULD BE A BAND NAME.

WHAT ABOUT "BATTLE UNICRON"?

DUDE! THATS PERFECT!

WITH ONLY A BAND NAME, WE IMPROVISED SONGS ON MY CASIO RAPMAN KEYBOARD.

MICROPHONE

VOICE EFFECTOR

DJ SCRATCH PAD

WE RECORDED THOSE SONGS AS WE MADE THEM UP ON A BROKEN FOUR TRACK.

UNICRON IS A PIECE OF CARPET FRINGE!

THOSE SONGS WERE PUT ON A CD AND IT WAS STRANGELY A HIT WITH EVERYONE WE KNEW.

"THE DEVIL IS, FROM FORT WORTH - BEN SNAKEPITS REVIEW

OUR FIRST AND ONLY SHOW WAS AT MOONTUNES ON APRIL 15TH 2001. IT WAS EASTER SUNDAY AND THE DAY JOEY RAMONE DIED. AT THE BEGINNING OF OUR SET WE PLUGGED IN THREE VACUUMS AND BLEW THE POWER OUT.

UNICRON IS MUCUS MEMBRANES.

BANDS WANTED TO DO SPLITS AND PLAY SHOWS WITH US BUT WE COULDN'T BECAUSE MY CASIO RAPMAN DIED.

OUR PAL DARREL REALLY WANTED US TO RECORD A SONG FOR A COMP HE WAS DOING. SO MUCH SO THAT HE BOUGHT US A NEW CASIO RAPMAN!

HOLY CRAP! MY BABY'S BACK!!

ONE NEW SONG WAS RECORDED FOR DARRELS COMP. BUT EVERY TIME WE TRIED TO RECORD AFTER THAT IT DIDN'T HAVE THE SAME MAGIC AND WE JUST LOST THE RECORDINGS.

WE SHOULD SAMPLE DOUBLE DRAGON'S THEME BUT PLAY IT BACKWARDS!*

YEAH!

*IT WAS A TERRIBLE IDEA.

THE CANADIAN HARDCORE BAND OXBAKER PUT OUT A SPLIT 7" WITH OUR ORIGINAL RECORDING. I STILL SEE IT IN DISTROS.

OXBAKER

battle unicron

THE OXBAKER SIDE IS SERIOUSLY SO GOOD.

I HAVE BEEN IN MANY BANDS. BUT BATTLE UNICRON IS PROBABLY THE MOST NOTABLE BAND I'VE BEEN IN.

...AND IT WAS BY NO MEANS IMPRESSIVE.

Skunky Beaumont

Retro-Spectro

People Men

AC/DC

DUSTIN ASKS ABOUT RECORDING NEW SONGS EVERY COUPLE OF YEARS. THE CASIO RAPMAN DOES STILL WORK (I THINK). SO WHO IS TO SAY WE WON'T PLAY AGAIN?

UNICRON IS LITTLE BOYS TEETH?!

BATTLE UNICRON.BANDCAMP.COM

ITSMERICKV.TUMBLR.COM

I am a fucking cartoon character of myself.

WITH GREAT ANTLERS COMES GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

"Let's take the stairs, my cape will get caught in the escalator." This deathless phrase, uttered by my young pal Alex, is the metaphorical starter's pistol shot that indicates another C2E2 has begun. "C2E2" stands for "Chicago Comic and Entertainment Expo," or something similarly lame. We've been going for the last few years. The first time, on a lark, we went down on a bus trip organized by the local comic book shop, which was cool because I sucked down a six-pack of Ranger® on the two-hundred-mile journey and just kinda woozed through the event. Once I had tarred myself with that particular brush—the brush labeled "I can be persuaded to take you to C2E2," not the brush labeled "I like to get drunk on the bus"—I somehow left myself open to be begged, cajoled, and mind-controlled into taking us down to C2E2 every year after that, long after the comic book shop had discontinued chartering the bus there. Bah. Alex is my ex-girlfriend's son. I have known him since the day he was born. Alex was a blue baby, and a several-weeks-overdue blue baby at that. Some diagnoses peg him as being autistic; others say he's got Asperger's Syndrome. I think it's more like what Marky Ramone used to say about Joey's odd behavior: "If you can figure out what he's got, they'll probably name it after you." The upshot is that he seems much younger than his actual age would suggest. We hang out one night a week, as he's only met his father twice, and somebody needs to show him how to goof off properly. By virtue of me dragging him along to the comic book store every week since he was in diapers, Alex has picked up my life-long love of comic books. For better or for worse, said love of comic books manifests itself somewhat differently in the younger generation than it did back when I was a sprouting young geek; my generation moved stealthily from drugstore to drugstore, avoiding peers and bullies; we excavated dusty back issues from neglected piles in creepy used bookstores; we pored over hand-typed back issue lists from mailorder dealers and cross-checked their asking prices with our allowance money. Now it's all movies and TV and shit. Comic book conventions used to be sporadic gatherings of lone wolf misfits, held in a hotel meeting room or two, where excited nerds chattered away at the slightest provocation, happy to have found their tribe, if briefly. Now it's movie stars and pro wrestlers and girls with their butts hanging out and tens of thousands of people milling around in America's largest (or so they told me) convention center. It cost me thirty bucks just to park the fucking car; that's sixty hours of meter parking in downtown Green Bay (or, for that matter, sixty times what I paid for *Giant-Size X-Men* #1 in 1975 [they're asking $7,495 for a mint condition copy on eBay today], or one hundred twenty times what I paid for *Incredible Hulk* #181, with the first appearance of Wolverine [on the bright side, my parking stub was number 2814, the same number as the space sector patrolled by Green Lantern Hal Jordan. So. There's that]). Thus, not surprisingly, I have come to loathe these sorts of events. These big so-called "comic book" conventions are like paying a bunch of money to be stuck in a fucking airport full of overpriced shit you maybe halfway want, except the other passengers are all dressed like Bane and Harley Quinn and no one sells Cinnabons. That said, I am not completely immune to the charms of cosplaying; however, unlike the riot of Banes and Harley Quinns riding up the escalator alongside my trudge up the stairs, I always base my costume ideas off of the central maxim of "what kind of passable costume can I make using the least possible effort?" For example, last year I went as the 1965 version of Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD. I already had a grey suit and a pair of wingtips; all I needed was an eye patch, a fedora, and a cigar to complete a really rather passable '65 Fury look. Of course, I'm fucking blind without my glasses—and I'm REALLY fucking blind with an eye patch on—so I spent the entirety of last year's C2E2 bonking into people and squinting at things. I might as well have gone as Matt Murdock. This year, however, I dragged my feet for so long on buying tickets—holding out until Alex's begging and pleading became so cacophonous it would have put a spoken word performance by Black Bolt to shame—that I didn't even have time to put forth a fedora/eye patch/cigar's worth of effort into my costuming. And, as Super-Alex deftly pirouettes on a landing in order to pose for a photo with a three-year-old girl in a Batgirl costume, I come to the conclusion that my last-minute costume thrown together this year is possibly the most ingenious of my cosplaying career (of course, coming from a guy who only ever dresses like the Vigilante, golden age Sandman, Percy Pinkerton, or some flavor of Nick Fury, I admit this ain't sayin' a lot): This year, I am dressed as *myself*. Now, I admit: On the face of things, this sounds dumb. I ASSURE YOU, THIS IS EVEN MORE DUMB (hence less dumb) THAN YOU THINK IT SOUNDS: Today, I am not merely dressed as myself—I am dressed as *Reverend Nørb, Classic '90s Edition.* That's right! That's right! Today, with equal parts disregard for both pride and propriety, I am dressed in FULL '90s BORIS THE SPRINKLER CHEESE-PUNK REGALIA! *White leather jacket with Monkees logo on the back?* CHECK! *Fluorescent rubber orange and chartreuse "Back to the Future" new wave sunglasses?* CHECK! *Pink Chuck Taylors I wore on the* Jenny Jones Show *twenty years ago?* CHECK! And, of course, *Sacred Mystic Motorcycle Helmet with Deer Antlers Bolted to the Sides and "GEEK" Written across the Front?* CHECK AND MATE!!! I am dressed in my most recognizable—my most memorable—my most I-DON'T-GIVE-A-FUCK-IF-I-PEAKED-TWENTY-YEARS-AGO-ABLE—attire. I am fucking embracing the fact that I am a fucking cartoon character of myself (or at least I *can* be, if I want) (and probably even if I don't want). I am throwing my fucking Reverend Nørb persona out there with all the Banes and Harley Quinns of the world, staking my claim as a pop culture character whom people, on occasion, dress up as. Okay, now sure: the only "people" who have dressed up as me have been me (however, the night is young!). DON'T SWEAT THE GODDAMN DETAILS, PEOPLE! IT'S COOL, I TELL YOU! My only barometer for success for this event? I want *one* person to recognize me and ask to get their picture taken with me. One person, out of tens of thousands. I want *one* maladjusted weirdo in this fucking spandex cattle car to say, "Hey, you're Reverend Nørb. I remember you! Can I get my picture taken with you?" One person will validate the entire project. Zero people?... well... let's just say that won't be particularly good for my self-esteem, and leave it at that. Alex and I reach the main floor, and I ask him to watch my Antler Helmet and sunglasses while I go take a leak. Upon exiting the latrine, I am

ALEX BARRETT

"Comic book" conventions are like paying a bunch of money to be stuck in a fucking airport full of overpriced shit you maybe halfway want.

aghast to find the Antler Helmet and sunglasses lying, completely unattended, on the floor of America's largest convention center. I look around. Alex is off posing for photos with some girls. I don't know what I'm more pissed about; the fact that he left my shit lying on the ground unattended, or the fact that no one bothered to fucking steal it. Boy, if you can't get your shit stolen in Chicago, you're really nobody these days. After reading Alex the riot act, we go our separate ways—but not before, of course, he leaves me with, "You really think someone's gonna recognize you and ask to have their picture taken with you?" I tell him, "I guess we'll see," and shuffle slowly off in no real direction, trying to not impale anyone with my deer antlers. Hours pass. No one asks for my photo. I snap one selfie, with a guy dressed as Kick-Ass. My exact words are, "Can I get a photo with you? I worked on that shitty Kick-Ass video game." Alex and I reconvene at the photo op area. The entire reason we had to go to this stupid thing was so he could get his photo taken with Melissa Benoist, the actress who plays Supergirl on TV these days. In the past, we've had our photos taken with luminaries such as Stan Lee and Jason Mewes; this is the first time I've sent him off to get his photo taken with a celebrity by himself. As I pace around in what serves as a sort of waiting area (which turns out to just be people waiting to get in line to get their picture taken with CM Punk, the wrestler), I start thinking about all the things that could go wrong for Alex, who doesn't always handle the unexpected with notable aplomb. What if he got in the wrong line? What if I got the ticket for the wrong day? What if some security goon is barking out directions which he misunderstands? If he doesn't get his photo taken with Supergirl, he's gonna be crushed. Should I have gotten in line with him? Or do you just gotta kinda let kids figure this shit out on their own? I think you gotta let them figure this shit on their own, right? Or no? I am pacing around, anxious. Suddenly, from behind me, I hear a questioning voice: *"Reverend Nørb?"* I turn around. It's some kid, probably a good thirty years my junior. "Guilty as charged!" I respond. "Oh! I thought that was you... because of the white leather jacket!" I tell him it used to be whiter twenty years ago. He tells me he is a big fan of Boris The Sprinkler (!) and Suburban Mutilation (!!!), and—you bet!—*asks to have his photo taken with me.* FUCKING BOOYAH. I AM OFFICIALLY A NOTABLE MINOR POP CULTURE ICON!!! I HAVE NOT LIVED IN VAIN!!! Flush with glory, I begin to post news of this great triumph online, but am interrupted again—this time by Alex, beaming as he holds up his sweet 8x10 of him in his Superman costume posing with Melissa Benoist. "THIS IS THE BEST C2E2 EVER!" he screams. I, for once, was not inclined to disagree.

Love,
–Nørb

Salvation from all this aural horseshittery.

¡Ramones Cuarenta! ¡Viva Ramones!

The months of April and July mark a couple significant forty-year anniversaries. On April 23, 1976, the debut Ramones LP was released unto an unready, unsuspecting world. The Ramones helped kick start a punk rock revolution with their take on back-to-basics rock'n'roll: short, loud, and primarily fast songs that got under your skin and had fans hooked faster than Chuck Berry in a hotel full of questionably-aged girls.

For as influential an album *RAMONES* was and continues to be, it hit the shelves forty years ago to a largely unprepared music-listening audience, the mass majority of which was enjoying a supergroup high loaded with indigestible guitar wankery (excremental example: The Eagles). Disco was also vampirically biting into the necks of many with its cocaine-tipped fangs, decked out in gold chains holding its gaudy, black satin cape in place. Hordes of prog-rock professors like Yes were also mucking around, adding to the inevitable hangover rock'n'roll was going to have to nurse. Yet with the Ramones first album, salvation from all this aural horseshittery was right in front of 'em. Some were fortunate enough to catch on right off the bat, while others wrote the record off as a total joke or a complete waste of time. Sales of their debut were fairly low. No, the world was not taken by storm by our Fearsome Foursome out of Queens, NY. Not just yet.

To give you an idea of how oblivious the record-buying public was at the time, the album topped out at #111 on the *Billboard Top 200* list, which isn't fantastic—although it's pretty damn good for a band and a genre no one had ever been exposed to previously. The Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) awards artists a gold record status when an album reaches 500,000 units sold in the United States; it took the Ramones thirty-eight years and one week to the day to sell half a million copies of their first record. Two years ago! Does the world seem like a big, unfair, spinning ball of dirt to you yet? Besides *Ramones Mania,* their "greatest hits" release from 1988, that is the *only* one of their albums to go gold here in the states. For anyone who has wondered why bands like the Ramones or Motörhead toured incessantly, now you know.

A fortieth anniversary reissue of *RAMONES* is scheduled for this year. I got in touch with the original producer Craig Leon, who got the mixing and mastering of the original recordings back up to sonic snuff this past March. Every reissue of the first album that's been released since the original 1976 pressing hasn't been done properly in the studio. Craig was more than happy to get the record rereleased the way it's supposed to sound, and he assured me it's gonna knock the socks off of Ramones fans. Tentatively slated for inclusion with the reissue are some demos and one of the first live Ramones shows recorded here in L.A. that he also sat behind the board on. It sounds like a perfectly fine way to celebrate one of the most influential records of the '70s.

July 4, 1976. Not only was it the Bicentennial celebration of the United States, ironically enough, it was the same day the Ramones played their first gig off of U.S. soil in London, England. The young'uns in the U.K. were already quite keen on the Ramones' first album, which had only been out for a couple of months. As short a time as it was, there were plenty of young, aspiring musicians crammed into the Roundhouse (approximately three thousand capacity) that evening, including future members of The Clash, Damned, Sex Pistols, Elvis Costello And The Attractions, Pretenders, and Adverts, who were curiously excited to experience live what they'd been listening to on vinyl. The Stranglers and the Ramones were on the three-band bill, with The Flamin' Groovies headlining. Just about anyone in attendance who ended up in a band after that Roundhouse show, and the one at Dingwalls the following evening, cite the Ramones as the key influence that sent the proverbial gig bug wriggling up their ass.

Members of the above-mentioned bands also recall members of the Ramones being very straight forward and encouraging with their, "If we can do it, so can you" attitude. It must be noted here that John Lydon, the media's soon-to-be "notorious" Johnny Rotten, was afraid to meet the band, thinking the Ramones were a gang and that they were going to beat his ass if they didn't dig him. In league with the Ramones pissing in the beer that they gave to Lydon story, I asked Arturo Vega—the band's graphic artist and right hand man since the beginning—some years ago if the story about Lydon being scared was actually true, and he laughed, "Yep, all true! I was the one who actually took him backstage that night, heh."

Having planted the seeds of rock'n'roll, the Ramones returned to the States after their two dates in England and went back to playing smaller bars. It took a few laps around the touring block before the Ramones started working their way up to larger venues. But, like with all aspects of the band, they stuck at it and began to carve their own tour niche across the globe.

An honest-to-goodness Ramones movie that Martin Scorsese was picked to direct has unfortunately been shitcanned as I write this column—apparently another Ramones documentary has taken precedence. A lot of people, including myself, can't help but wonder why anyone would be lame enough to turn down a chance to work with Scorsese, especially since he's a guy that would nail a film set in NYC during the '70s.

I was reminded by my wife that life rights absolutely have to be signed off in order to make a film depicting any person or persons. Most people reading this should be able to remember what (you heard me) Johnny Ramone was married to, so it doesn't take a neurosurgeon to surmise why she's got a hard on to do a documentary instead of a film. God forbid anyone get a gist of the real Johnny from a movie, right?

From info that has been scoped out for this upcoming documentary, the Roundhouse gig is going to be the initial starting point, to show just how much of an influence the band had on the U.K. punk scene. Ramones fans can only hope that there's some filmed footage of the Roundhouse and Dingwalls shows floating around that can finally be put to good use—like the filmed footage from the Ramones December 31, 1977 Rainbow Theatre show in London. The soundboard tapes were used for their *It's Alive* live album, but the pro-shot filmed footage turned up years later and was included in the Ramones double DVD retrospective *Ramones It's Alive: 1974-1996*. If you haven't checked out that DVD set, the Rainbow footage alone *more* than validates the purchase price.

Besides these two options to celebrate the band's continuing influence, there's also a memorabilia-packed, traveling Ramones exhibit happening, with plans to hit multiple cities throughout 2017 in addition to the Queens and Los Angeles installations happening this year. But however you plan on celebrating, do it LOUD and proud!

¡Viva rock and roll! ¡Viva Ramones!

–Designated Dale
designateddale@yahoo.com

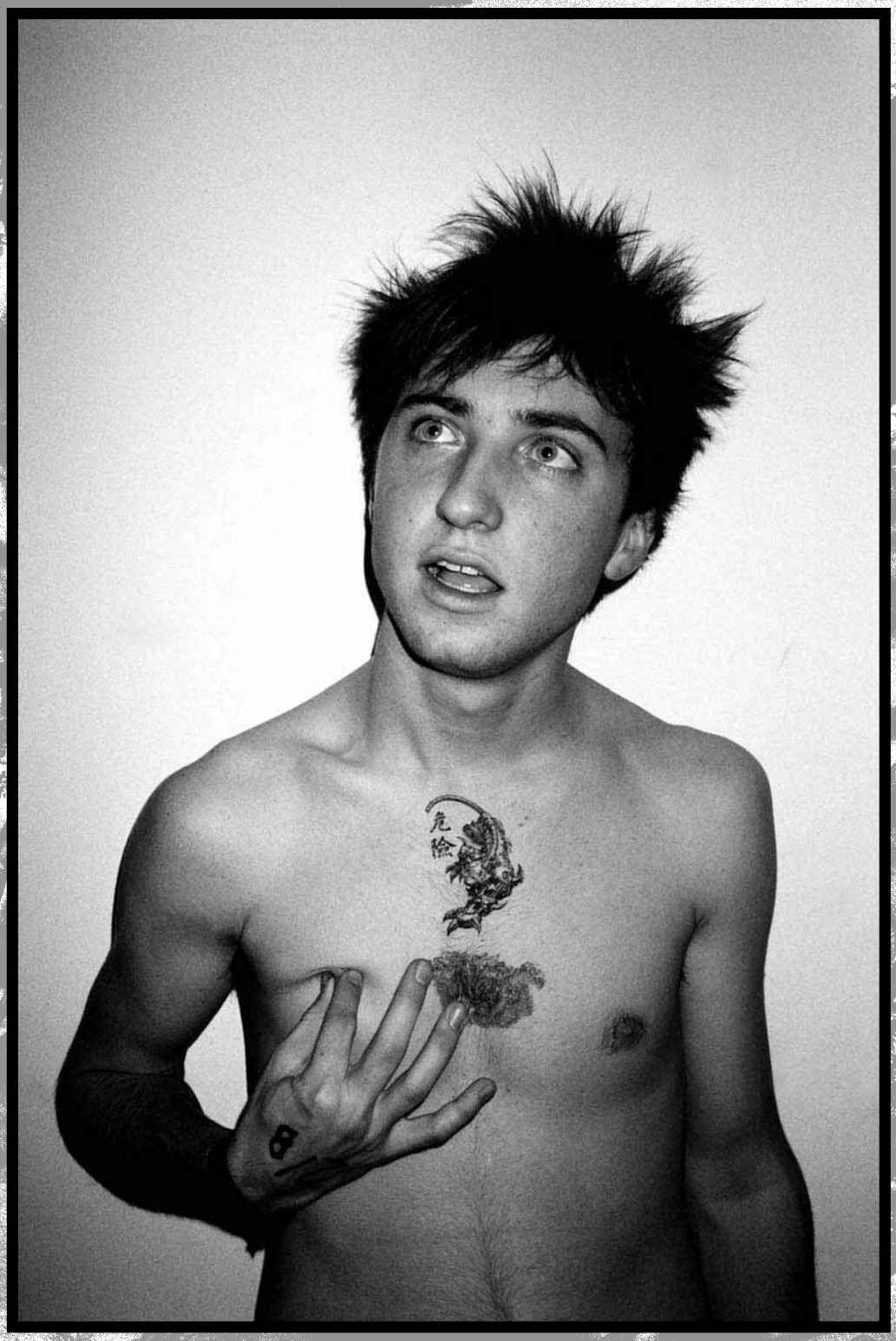
BILL PINKEL

However you plan on celebrating, do it LOUD and proud!

BITE the CACTUS 10 WAYS TO BECOME A SUCCESSFUL ARTIST

BY ADRIAN CHI

DRAW THINGS YOU'RE NOT GOOD AT DRAWING
"COW"
"DOG"
"GOAT"
I'M NOT GOOD AT DRAWING ANIMALS...
IF YOU DRAW YOURSELF AND AN ANIMAL...
YOU SHOULD BE HUGGING.
IF YOU FIND A FRIEND'S SKETCHBOOK, FILL THE PAGES UP WITH YOUR OWN ART!
"BUDDY"
"CHIRPY"
WTF?
"ROCKY"
IT WILL BE A LITTLE GIFT.
I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT TATTOOS, BUT I'M PRETTY SURE THEY'RE BETTER WHEN DRAWN DIRECTLY ON THE SKIN
NO PRACTICE SKETCH?
NO
IMPRESSIVE
— DON'T DRINK AND DRAW—
AAAHHH THIS IS ALL GARBAGE!!
WELL YOU CAN IF YOU WANT BUT ICERTAINLY CAN'T...
DRAW THINGS YOU LIKE LOOKING AT.
OH MY GOD THIS IS SO FUCKING RELAXING!
I LIKE LOOKING AT PLANTS
IF YOU DRAW A BAND, AND YOU DRAW THE LEFT-HANDED GUITARIST PLAYING A RIGHT-HANDED GUITAR...
WHADDYOU THINK?
IT'S GREAAAT... UM... JUST...
THEY MAY NOT BE PLEASED
IF YOU DRAW YOURSELF WITH ANY ANIMAL... YOU SHOULD BE HUGGING
my Piiig
SMARF
...NOT INCLUDING HUMANS... I MEAN -HUMANS OPTIONAL...
IF YOU MAKE ART WITHOUT INTENDING ON SHARING IT WITH ANYONE ... IT'S USUALLY BETTER
I NEVER PLAN ON SHARING MY COMICS
THAT'S WHY THEY'RE SO GOOD...
SERIOUSLY THOUGH... SOMETIMES ITS EASIER TO DANCE WHEN NO ONES WATCHING - YA KNOW?



Dan Monick's Photo Page

Nick, Los Angeles, 2000-Something

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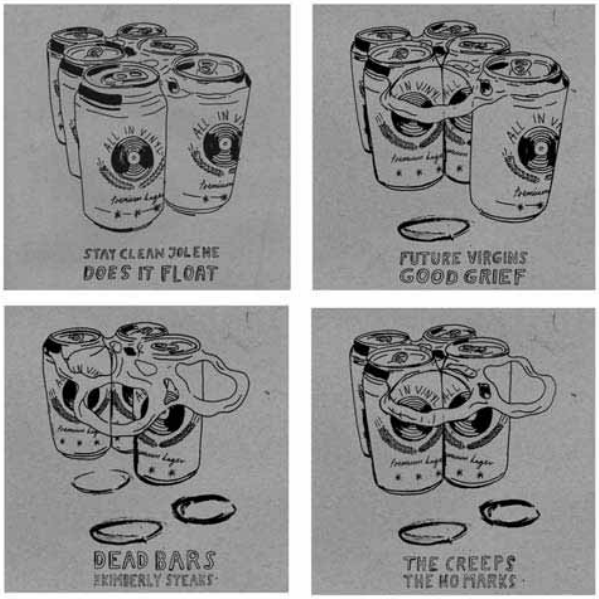

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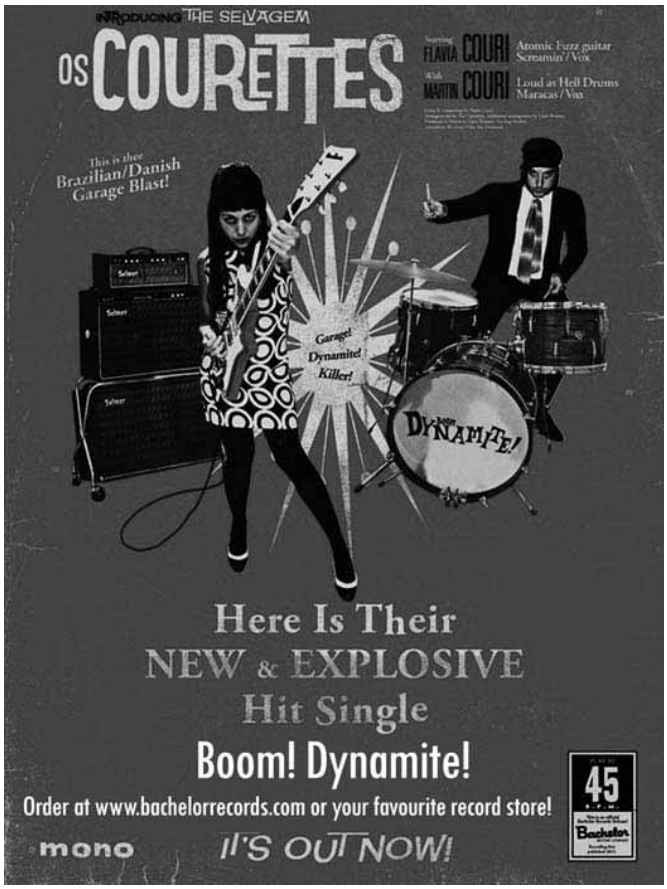

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CHICO SIMIO #55 BY ART F.

SOMETIMES MY BRAIN GOES INTO HYPERDRIVE. WHY AM I HERE? WHAT IS MY PURPOSE? WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

SO MANY QUESTIONS, AND NOT ENOUGH ANSWERS....

ARE WE ALONE IN THE UNIVERSE?

...OR ARE WE JUST SPECKS TO BE FLICKED AROUND BY SOME CELESTIAL BEING?

BUT THEN..

MY BURRITO IS READY AND ALL IS ONCE AGAIN RIGHT WITH THE WORLD.

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WE ARE WHAT WE PUT IN OUR HEADS.
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WE WANT TO DESTROY IT.

EVERY WEEK WE FIND THE BEST VOICES IN THE UNDERGROUND BUILDNG IT BRICK BY BRICK.
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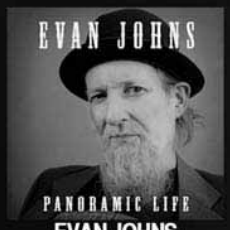

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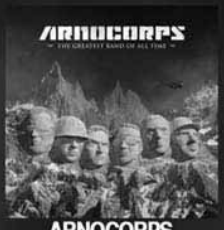

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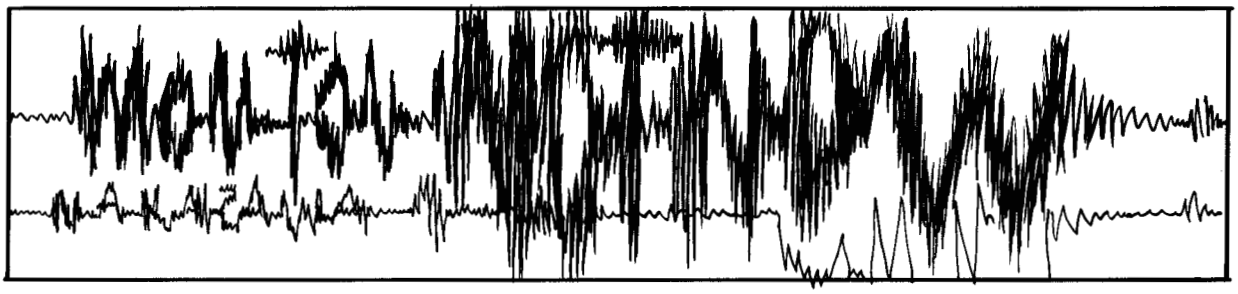


I WORRIED A LOT ABOUT PREPAREDNESS AND SELF DEFENSE. YOU MIGHT THINK SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAPPENED TO ME IN THE PAST TO MAKE ME LIKE THIS. IF SO, IT WAS SOMETHING I WOULD NEVER TALK ABOUT.

WATER, CANNED FOOD, PARACORD, MACHETE, FIRST AID

I RARELY WENT CAMPING BUT BOUGHT BEAR SPRAY TO USE AGAINST HUMAN ATTACKERS. ATTACKERS IN THE CITY.

WARNING! BEAR SPRAY

F.U. URBAN ATTACKERS!

THE DAY IT FINALLY HAPPENED I WAS ACTUALLY A LITTLE THRILLED TO USE THE BEAR SPRAY ON A BAD GUY.

BUT THE BEAR THAT CAME OUT OF THE SPRAY CAN MAULED ME TO DEATH!

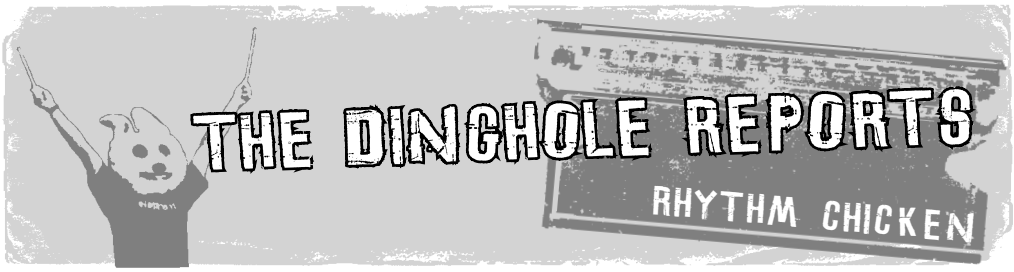
POOF

AND NOW I'M WRITING THIS COMIC TO YOU FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE...

...TO WARN YOU OF A TERRIBLE EARTHQUAKE ABOUT TO STRIKE! YOU MUST PREPARE!!

LET'S GET READY TO RUMBLE!!

KN 3/16



Recovery and rock'n'roll don't always get along as well as they should.

Boot Stomping on My Spirits

My drum set has been in the back of my car collecting dust. It has been exactly nine months to the day since my last attendance at a punk rock show. In two days it will be exactly nine months since my last live Rhythm Chicken performance. This last September, I was *really* excited to get down to Green Bay for a Figgs/Tenement show to see great live rock'n'roll, but I was also anxious to offer my own weird, unrequested offering of ruckus to the evening's lineup. Just eight days before that gig, I found myself bedridden due to my ongoing back problems. My business closed up for one month. This was a substantial financial blow and an all-around boot stomping on my spirits.

For the first three days I had to roll onto my side to piss into an empty milk jug. The pain of just standing up made me nearly pass out. Back to the hospital, back to weekly epidural shots into my spine, back to the hell of being forced to lie down all day as life passed me by outside my attic window. This wasn't my first experience with life-halting back troubles; about seven years ago I had my first episode of spinal disc problems. Nothing squelches your rock'n'roll ambitions quite like being stuck in bed with searing back pain. Recovery and rock'n'roll don't always get along as well as they should.

By late October I felt well enough to reopen my shop and get back to work. It felt good to be back among the living. I moved slowly and cautiously, but I was open for business again. The next three months had a few setbacks of lingering pain, but if I just took it easy and spent most of my non-working hours lying down, life went on. I found that playing quieter, low-intensity music helped keep my back muscles loose and slowed down the pain of the workday. Instead of closing the shop to the Mind Spiders and Toys That Kill, I mopped and did dishes to Luna and Yo La Tango (guilty pleasures). Still, by the end of the workday all I wanted to do was lay down. This is most certainly *not* the preferred lifestyle of a rock'n'roll enthusiast, and it sure as *cluck* ain't in the Rhythm Chicken's mission statement!

I had already started booking this winter's Ephraim punk show. Maybe I couldn't drive down to the city for some punk rock, but Holy Shit!, the Phylums, and Al Scorch were going to bring the chaos to my kitchen! The annual Ephraim winter punk show at my shop has become my new Christmas. It's the most wonderful night of the year! However, by mid-February I could barely make it through a day of work. Lightning bolts of pain shot down my right leg as my bulging disc nudged up against my sciatic nerve. With a heavy heart, I again had to close my shop. With the *heaviest* of hearts, I had to cancel the Ephraim punk show. That *really* hurts.

For almost seven years, I've tried every advised "cure" for my back problems. Physical therapy worked for a while. Going to my chiropractor usually worked to help me through painful flare-ups. Yoga didn't quite help. Acupuncture didn't quite help. I started a new program called Somatics, which didn't quite help. Almost everyone and their siblings had advice for how to fix my problem. My favorite was when a regular customer *insisted* that I get this special back strap that holds special magnets against your lower back. These magnets draw the healing powers from the earth and redirect them into your problem area. Ain't science great?

Over the last seven years, everyone along the way has told me to avoid surgery at all costs. I've gotten to a point where I feel I've pretty much tried everything. I know if I keep going along the path I've been following I will be bedridden and closing up my business more frequently. It's already been too frequent for my liking. I called up my punk rock doctor, Dr. Phil (who has recently moved to Seattle, you lucky Seattlites!), and he advised me to finally look into surgery. That was my tipping point.

For the first time in twenty-three years, I now have healthcare coverage. It feels weird. I know people have all different opinions about Obamacare, but it is surely helping me. The portion of my first MRI that the insurance covered has already exceeded my premiums (not to mention the three doctor visits, x-rays, and hospital bills). My surgeon and I are currently waiting to hear from my insurance company if they will cover the surgery. If they do, then I'm under the knife. The surgeon will gut me like a fish, remove my crumbling disc, and fuse the two vertebrae together. Then there will be a two-month recovery when I still can't work. That hurts. If my insurance company does not clear the surgery, then... I'm scared. The medical costs could put me in debt for decades. That hurts. This entire scenario is slowly sucking the fun-loving ruckus from my life. That hurts. On top of everything else, my back hurts.

What the hell have I become? This is, by far, the bleakest and most depressing column I've ever written! Where's the beer-soaked fun? Where is the surreal adventure and reality-tweaking? Where's the... the... *where's the ruckus*? After sixteen years of chaotic rhythm rock, after *seven hundred* documented chicken gigs, after countless parades, roadside rock operas, and bathroom concerts, *is this where it all ends*? Has the world's worst and longest-running joke finally been laid to rest?

Dinghole Report #156: Long Distance Kitchen Ruckus for Bill! (Rhythm Chicken sighting #701)

Wait a minute... I lied. There actually was a brief glimmer of ruckus in that nine-month hiatus! It was a monumental birthday for my friend Bill of Milwaukee's Rushmor Records. I was understaffed, overworked, and experiencing fluctuating levels of back pain in late August. The thought of missing his big birthday party really tore me up. Bill and Dan at Rushmor have been such great friends and major supporters of many Rhythm Chicken endeavors over the years. They sponsored the very first ever Rhythm Chicken parade float. They had attained sainthood in this chicken's mind.

Not being able to attend Bill's party really brought me down. After a little soul-searching, I figured the least I could do was send him a Rhythm Chicken Ruckus Card in the form of a video. After closing up the shop on his birthday, I set up the chickenkit in my kitchen and made a big "Happy Birthday" sign. My hen Kasia ran the camera. Our friend Agnieszka wore a rubber unicorn head mask and danced with the ruckus logs while another friend Scott drank beer and screamed while shaking the sign. It wasn't exactly a drumset-smashing, dimension-warping, slam-bam punk rock opus, but it was just weird enough to make up for it!

The video was posted on a host of Milwaukee-based social media venues. Granted, the ruckus may have been somewhat mild, but even in these dark days of hard times, a bizarre little flame still shimmers. Three clucks for Bill! *Cluck! Cluck! Cluck!*

As for the questionable future of the Rhythm Chicken, I just may have to invent the wheelchair drum set or start mounting drums and cymbals onto a walker.

Ruckus cannot die.

–Rhythm Chicken

RYAN GELATIN

Has the world's worst and longest-running joke finally been laid to rest?

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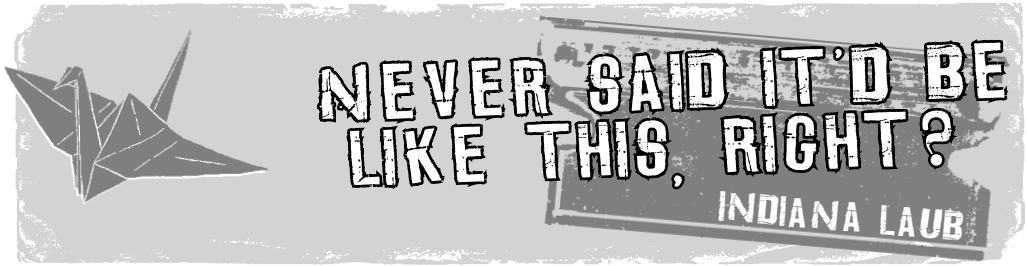


I knew the enemy I ran from was me.

Magic Hugs Man on the Subject of Happiness

When I was fifteen I forcibly had my fortune read. It was on State Street in downtown Santa Barbara, the city where I spent my entire life until last year. A pack of us were roving aimlessly, just up and down and up and down the six blocks between Borders and the 101 overpass.

He was set up on a bench in front of the Hamburger Habit—this bald-headed, baby-faced man of obscure age—the centerpiece in a tableau of candles, tarot cards, and authoritative-looking mystical books. One of us must have made eye contact because something switched on in him and he rose to greet us as we approached. He came at us with carnie-like aggression, the kind that's chatty and ingratiating with a shadow of barely muted violence just below the surface.

"Girls, come here! I want to do something for all you girls—no—*ladies*! Young ladies! Lemme show you something. Don't be rude, now!"

We veered to the far side of the sidewalk and tried to laugh him off until he physically blocked us, arms outstretched.

"Have a magic hug! Everyone gets a magic hug!"

Beaming, he began throwing his arms around my friends one or two at a time, humming a low note. I ducked out from what would have been a three-fer, narrowly avoiding his heavy hands. He didn't seem to notice. This is how we met Magic Hugs Man.

After the magic hugs were over, he told us that he could tell us anything about ourselves and the paths of our lives; all we had to do was ask. The objects on the bench were part of his routine, which seemed like a mashup of card reading, palm reading, and general occultish ritual. There was nothing to do but go along with it.

He did Sarah first. He told her to ask a question about her life, anything she wanted to know. She considered for a few seconds, giggling nervously before asking, "How do I decide what job to do?"

He took her right hand in both of his and stared pryingly into her eyes for an uncomfortable minute.

I never knew Sarah very well, even though she was always around; it was that awkward thing that happens when your high school best friend has this other best friend from elementary school, and then you're all just stuck together. So I can't speak to the truth of what he told her on a personal level, but I know that she grew quiet and serious when he spoke.

"You feel lost when you think about your future because you're like a little boat tossing at sea. You have… some trouble with your mother, a real stormy relationship. There's some deep stuff going on there. You need to work it out with her before anything else."

Eleven years later the situation is a little clearer to me, what mystic power might have allowed him to divine that a fifteen-year-old girl might be having issues with her mom. He didn't even really answer the question. But at the time, there was a graveness that came over all of us with his answer. This man, strange and vaguely threatening as he was, was nailing it. He was telling us that we had deep stuff going on. That was enough to hold us a while longer. He smiled complacently and did Cory next.

I'd fallen back behind the others by now. It was my signature move, developed over a lifetime of evading group photos and birthday singalongs. Mystic power or no, I didn't want any fortune teller touching my hands and looking into my soul. But, of course, my discomfort went up like a beacon and Magic Hugs Man zeroed in on me.

"Now you, back there. Smile, baby, come here. What's your question?"

"I'm good," I insisted, already moving toward him by some force out of my control. "I don't do this stuff. I'd rather just, like, figure it out?" But he wasn't having it, and I was stuck.

Standing before my friends and the oracle, it was suddenly impossible to think. If I was going to be dragged into this, I at least wanted to have a decently sophisticated question to ask. But I was drawing a blank. I blurted out the only thing I could think of; it sounded babyish and dull as soon as I said it.

"Am I going to be happy?"

He took my hand for only a few seconds before he let go.

"The answer is no."

I almost flinched, and I covered it with indignation.

"Dude, what the hell?"

"You won't be happy here," he said. "Never gonna happen. What you need is… a van. You need to get you a good van, maybe one of those Volkswagen buses, and travel all around in it. Yes. That's what you gotta do."

It sounded cheesy and stupid, even then. Even to someone who maybe wanted that, who maybe had already started privately entertaining fantasies like that. Fantasies that I never would have said out loud—not to my friends, not to anyone. I shrugged, mumbled, "Okay, maybe," and retreated.

We let him finish all of our readings in much the same way we were learning to placate aggressive men in every other part of our lives. Patient, humoring. We circled close and shot each other goofy looks while he moved through us.

When he was done, he abruptly dropped the harmless Buddha act and told us that people usually pay him five dollars per reading. This was it, the end of the line. There was only a moment of anxious silence before we threw our hands up and ran away laughing, leaving Magic Hugs Man behind.

The summer before last, immediately following a two-week Midwestern tour, I moved nine hundred miles from Santa Barbara to Oregon. Not to Portland but Corvallis, a not-quite-mid-sized college town in the Willamette Valley that inspires relatives and old acquaintances to ask such questions as "How's Portland?" Or, "What's the name of that town again?"

My partner and I chose this place years ago because our bands happened to stop by on a couple of tours and had a good time. We played some fun shows; we met some new friends. Things escalated. I spent a total of two and a half days in this town before we moved here.

It was one of the most uncharacteristic things I've ever done—for a supposed punk, I'm a fan of safe bets and reliable results. I stayed on in my hometown for college. I kept my high school job for four years, until the store closed down, then I got a job at the place next door. As teenagers, my friends would get permission to go out to raves by telling their parents it was so safe, even I was going. (I wasn't.)

But something felt right about Corvallis, so we tied up our loose ends and took off. The whole thing could have gone horribly wrong, but so far it's one of the best decisions I've made. Something about this place or the act of just moving

MITCH CLEM and NATION OF AMANDA

We were learning to placate aggressive men in every other part of our lives. Patient, humoring.

got me going, and lately I have so much to look forward to. I'm setting up shows and working on new projects—right now is the most active I've been in a community since I found out about punk shows in ninth grade. Sometimes you just get in a good groove.

The truth is that I spent the beginning of last year—and most of the middle, and some of the end—working to throw off the depression that had settled into my skin and become an almost-comfortable baseline for me since maybe 2012— maybe 2011. Those who know the feeling will understand how hard it is to mark the exact date of each awful beginning, although I know that my decision to leave town became final around the time I realized that I was indifferently estimating the length of this most recent interval in years, not months.

I tried not to expect miracles. I listened to that Nerve Agents song "Portland" while I packed; I knew the enemy I ran from was me. I told myself that changing the scenery wasn't going to fix everything.

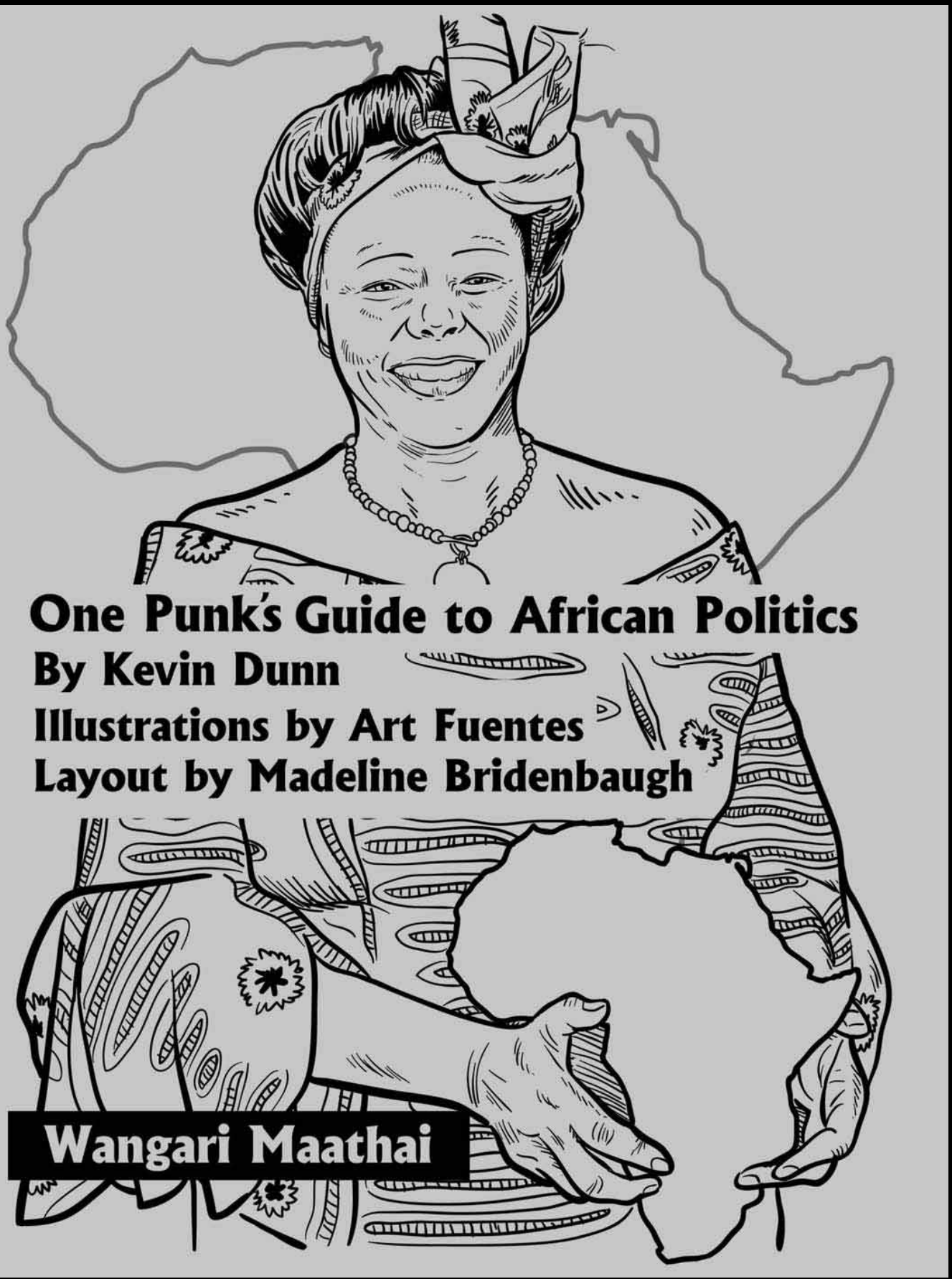
But I made it here and I started doing what I could. Some days what I could do was walk around the neighborhood for hours. Some days it was putting shoes on at least once. It almost felt random, the things that seemed attainable on a day-to-day basis. But then it happened that some days what I could do was spend four hours drawing a flier for a show. Or say yes to joining a new band. One day I exchanged numbers with an actual new friend I made all by myself, like a real human being. At some point, happiness stopped feeling so much like something that's handed down by some benevolence of fate, something you either get or you don't. It felt like an action, like something you can do if you know how.

Some of us saw Magic Hugs Man a few more times after we got our fortunes told, always crossing the street to avoid him. He became part of the shared lore of our friend group, another inside joke about a downtown weirdo. That group dissolved over the next year. Of the five or six of us who were there, there's only one I still talk to.

I try not to get too hung up about what he said to me, about never being happy there. Even if he really did know what I needed, fuck telling somebody where they can and can't be okay. I know he read me like a shallow story. How difficult could it be to look at a weirdo kid with self-cut hair and oversized black clothes and guess at their secret ambitions? I was an open book. I was the kind of kid who was desperate and nervous enough to ask a complete stranger if I was going to be happy.

As it turns out, I'm not really a tour dog anyway. True, I've gone out almost every year since I started; some of those tours have been the best times of my life. There were a few years when hitting the road was all I wanted to work toward. But I'm slowing down, at least for now. I find myself getting more excited about local shows than the thought of leaving. I'm into long-term projects and sticking around. I'm into where I am and what we're doing here.

–Indiana Laub



One Punk's Guide to African Politics

By Kevin Dunn
Illustrations by Art Fuentes
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Wangari Maathai

In my not-so-secret life, I am a scholar of African politics. My interest in Africa came from being an anti-racist activist in the American South. In college, I got involved in the anti-apartheid movement and realized how little I knew about Africa and how simplistic the media coverage was. Fortunately, I had a professor who was an expert on African politics and I took every course he had to offer. I began to realize that even though Africa was treated marginally by the media, it was central to world affairs: the U.S. and U.S.S.R. fought proxy wars there, they and other powers conspired to overthrow African governments, and all worked hard to ensure they had access to vital African resources and raw materials (from copper, gold, and diamonds to cotton, chocolate, and uranium). The more I learned, the more I realized how intertwined Africa was with world affairs and everyone's daily life. I continued studying Africa in graduate school and have spent time in numerous countries across the continent in the subsequent years.

A few years ago, my friend Pierre Englebert and I wrote the textbook Inside African Politics. *If you take a college course on African politics, chances are pretty high that you'll be assigned that book. When writing it, Pierre and I cringed at how much we had to simplify and generalize in order to make everything fit into one book. If we were generalizing then, I'm simplifying things in this essay to an epic degree. It is a zine-length piece on a multifaceted subject, which I hope will set the foundation for a greater understanding and interest in a complex topic.*

Since punk taught me that I didn't need to write a complicated ten-minute song to get my ideas across, this essay is a distillation of focused ideas, not an omnibus of all that is African politics; The Minutemen wrote more intelligent songs than Bob Dylan ever did. Punk taught me to question what governments and the media told me. We need to push beyond the bullshit and see how all our lives are interconnected across the globe. What happens in Africa impacts us, just as our actions (however small) impact Africa. Punk taught me that our personal choices matter, from the products we buy to the food we eat: when we buy fair trade coffee, it has an impact; when we buy a cell phone with minerals from Africa, it has an impact. Punk taught me that being informed and engaged means not allowing others with less-principled motives to call the shots. Consider this your punk rock primer to African politics.

A Brief Historical Overview

Understanding today's Africa requires a degree of historical awareness, especially of life before European conquest, the impact of colonization, and some of the major developments after independence. It is impossible to convey the diversity and complexity of African societies before European colonization in the nineteenth century. There was a wide range of *types* of societies across the continent, from well-organized empires, to complex chieftaincies, to small groups of nomadic hunters-and-gatherers. There was no one way of organizing society nor was there a common religious system (for the record, Christianity and Islam both found a home in Africa before they did in Europe). Africans had a lengthy political history prior to European conquest, enjoying substantial interaction and trade with other parts of the world. Northern Africa and the entire eastern coast were closely connected to the Islamic world and beyond, while interaction with Europe went back as far as ancient Greece and Rome. (The gold in the earliest English coins came from West Africa). The very complexity of African politics today is shaped in part by the plural nature of political authority and experiences that existed before European colonization.

European conquest was driven largely by changing dynamics within Europe (such as the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution) that altered how Europeans thought and acted towards non-Europeans. Europeans developed a sense of superiority and entitlement—fueled by religion, science, and economics—that justified the brutal conquest and extermination of other peoples around the world. By the late nineteenth century, the major European powers of the time—the U.K., France, Germany—and lesser powers such as Spain, Portugal, and Belgium, began to expand their territorial holdings in Africa, moving beyond their coastal trading posts and violently pushing deeper into the interior, occasionally bumping into each other.

Otto von Bismarck recognized that competition for African territory might lead to a European war for which he knew Germany wasn't quite ready, so he invited representatives from European powers and the U.S. (who had established a pseudo-colony in Liberia for freed slaves)—to Berlin between 1884-85 to work out an agreement on dividing the continent among themselves. The resulting division was largely arbitrary, with boundaries imposed on top of the organic ways in which African political life had developed. The Berlin Conference required colonial powers to establish "effective control" of their territories or lose them to other colonial powers. European powers established control over every part of the continent in the ensuing "Scramble for Africa," with the exception of America's Liberia and the independent kingdom of Ethiopia, both of which successfully resisted European invasions. The resulting national boundaries are almost exactly the same on today's map of Africa.

I'll focus on three key points in European colonialism. First, even though the colonial era was rather short (roughly 1880s-1960s), it dramatically restructured most African societies. Second, pre-colonial practices and beliefs did not completely disappear, but continued and were adapted to fit the new colonial reality. Third, all of Africa was brought into the global political and economic systems that Europeans were constructing.

Europeans developed a sense of superiority and entitlement that justified the brutal conquest of other peoples around the world.

Politically, Africa was now divided into *states,* with clearly defined borders and a central authority controlled by the colonial power. In political science we refer to this as the "international sovereign state system," though Africans did not have "sovereignty" (they did not rule themselves). We still have this system today and its familiarity makes it seem natural, but it was created relatively recently through conquest and assimilation.

The Europeans brought Africans into the global capitalist system violently. Through the imposition of taxation, forced labor, and land-grabbing, Europeans extracted vast resources from their African colonies. Africans were forced to grow cash crops—coffee, tea, sugar, rubber, cotton, et cetera—or work in mines to fuel the industrial economies back in Europe. It is important to note that at under colonialism, Africa started importing basic foods because its crops went to meet Western desires. It stopped being self-sufficient,

a condition that continues today. While there were substantial differences in the ways the Europeans ruled their various colonies, colonialism radically altered African economies in the service of colonial capitalism. Colonialism imposed a European state model with little connection to African traditions and produced African elites who sought to make the best of the situation by mastering the new colonially-created reality.

At the end of World War I, Germany was forced to relinquish its colonies to the victors. Europeans increasingly extracted resources from Africa, especially as the Great Depression worsened. However, the end of World War II brought several changes: European powers were weak and exhausted, the new global powers (U.S. and U.S.S.R.) were interested in seeing European empires dismantled, and Africans were emboldened to push for changes.

In some cases, that push turned violent and liberation wars emerged in colonies that tended to have lots of white settlers who didn't want to relinquish their positions of privilege, such as Kenya and Algeria. In most colonies, the transition to independence was smooth and orderly, but it was occasionally chaotic. For instance, Belgium's abrupt departure from the Congo left a huge power vacuum that virtually guaranteed disaster (there were only a dozen or so college-educated Congolese in a country of more than fifteen million). The Portuguese violently clung to their colonies, fighting several liberation wars until their own soldiers mutinied in 1976. In Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), white settlers emulated the U.S. and declared themselves independent, until finally being forced to submit to majority rule in the 1980s. In neighboring South Africa, the white minority had been granted independence by the U.K. earlier in the century and maintained their system of white rule (a.k.a. "apartheid") until they transitioned to majority rule in 1994.

The post-independence African leaders inherited government institutions that had limited credibility with the citizens. Their economic systems were largely based around exporting cash crops to the West and continued the legacy of violent colonial occupation that included extremely poor health and education services. (Despite their "civilizing" rhetoric, Europeans didn't do shit regarding the general betterment of African lives). This historical context is the backdrop for contemporary African politics.

Ethnicity, the World of Spirits, Class, Gender, and Politics

People use a number of useful concepts when looking at different types of political systems around the world. This is known as conducting "comparative analysis." I find it useful to talk about big concepts—such as ethnicity, religion, class, gender, and civil society—to provide a useful framework for understanding African politics.

Ethnicity is probably one of the most useful—and difficult—concepts for studying African politics. Statistically speaking, Africa is far more ethnically diverse than the rest of the world, but there is a great degree of variation among African countries. For example, Swaziland's population is ninety-seven percent ethnic Swazis, while Uganda has about twenty-five very different groups, including several well-established pre-colonial kingdoms. But how to define "ethnic group" is debatable. Different scholars will claim that a country like Angola has between eight and one hundred ethnic groups, or the Democratic Republic of Congo between four and over three hundred. This should indicate that using the term "ethnicity" can be a problem. (Think about how troublesome ethnic categories like "white" and "Hispanic" are in the U.S. once you start narrowing down the country and region of someone's heritage).

Many scholars consider one's ethnic group to be the most important factor shaping political behavior in Africa. But there is a fair amount of disagreement regarding whether ethnicity is a consequence or a cause of other features of African politics, and it is useful to understand that distinction. Historically, some observers understood ethnicity (often just framed as "tribalism") as a deeply-rooted and fixed aspect of people's identity that determined how they acted and could thus explain virtually all aspects of African politics. This approach treats identities as preexisting and permanent, leading to a frequent assumption that Africa's ethnic diversity is the *cause* of conflict, underdevelopment, and political corruption.

In Africa, as elsewhere, ethnicity is important, but it is more often a consequence than a cause of politics.

While you still see such ideas in the media, few scholars accept this explanation anymore. Rather, most regard ethnicity as a cultural resource that people—particularly political elites—can appeal to in certain circumstances. Ethnic identities, like all forms of identity, are somewhat malleable and are the *consequence* of other factors (including colonialism, which actually invented a number of "tribes"). Recognizing that ethnicity is constructed does not mean that these identities or the social divisions they produce are not real. Clearly, ethnicity is important within African politics, but understanding it as constructed allows us to see how it is utilized by elites to advance political agendas.

Take this example: why are two ethnic groups—Chewas and Tumbukas—allies in Zambia but adversaries in neighboring Malawi? The political scientist Daniel Posner recognized that it had to do with the political calculations elites made. In Zambia, both groups were small relative to other ethnic groups, so they banded together in alliance. In Malawi, both were large enough to compete with each other for political gains. In Africa, as elsewhere, ethnicity is important, but it is more often a consequence than a cause of politics.

Regarding religion, there is a great degree of diversity across the continent. Countries in the north and along the coast of East Africa have large Muslim (mostly Sunni) populations, while Christianity is more dominant in southern Africa and along the coast of West Africa. Religion has rarely been a source of conflict in Africa, though that has started to change in recent years.

Again, like ethnicity, religious difference is not the cause of conflict, but is utilized by elites to garner support for specific political agendas. For example, the recent conflict in the Central Africa Republic between Christian and Muslim militias has nothing to do with religious doctrines and everything to do with political elites mobilizing support against each other.

Recently, there has also been the rise of more radical and fundamentalist beliefs among some African Muslims, particularly in countries such as Somalia (with al-Shabaab), Nigeria (with Boko Haram) and Mali (with al-Qaeda of the Maghreb). At the same time, Africa has seen a rapid growth of Christianity, particularly among evangelicals and Pentecostals. Africa will soon be home to

the world's largest population of Christians. This shift is going to impact the articulation of a global Christian identity, particularly since what is being advanced tends to be socially conservative, including vehement pro-life and anti-LGBTQ positions.

Africans have also produced their own indigenous spiritual belief systems. A common characteristic of these diverse belief systems is that our material world and the world of spirits and the dead are intimately intertwined. There is an understanding that spirits are active and powerful in our world, extending their influence into the political realm. Western observers often have a difficult time taking intermingling of the spiritual and material worlds into account, but it is not unusual to encounter active belief in—and employment of—witchcraft in much of Africa. Like elsewhere in the world, politicians must often gain a degree of spiritual legitimacy to be successful, but in Africa that legitimacy may combine Christianity, Islam, and indigenous spiritual beliefs.

Class analysis has long been used to understand life in industrialized societies such as those in the West. The idea is that social classes emerge around the means of production, resulting in clear distinctions between the working classes and the capitalist elite; Africa tends to lack industrial economies and well-defined class categories, so class analysis seems of limited use.

Certainly there are class divisions between the rich and poor, but control of the state—through employment, expenditures, patronage, and corruption—is what is central to class formation in Africa. This helps explain why controlling the state is so important: winners get power and wealth, while losers don't get anything (in contrast to the U.S., where the loser of a presidential election is still going to be super rich and influential). Many scholars have observed that this system of class formation has helped thwart economic development because it would create competing groups of political and economic elites.

As elsewhere, gender is an important dimension of African politics. Many laws discriminate against women, limiting their access to land and other types of property. Interestingly, many of these laws were introduced under colonialism. While pre-colonial African societies were not ideal for women, colonialism represented a major assault on established African gender relations and women's power.

Christianity stressed female domesticity and subordination, while Westernized education gave men advantages over women and Western marriage practices undermined women's access to property, treating women as minors needing male guardians. Today, there is no single "African woman's experience." While generally characterized by inequality and marginalization, the degree of those varies according to class, region, and the urban/rural divide.

Rural women face significant physical hardships, as they are often responsible for working the fields, carrying water, gathering wood, maintaining the household, and caring for the children. In parts of East Africa, women have often been restricted to rural economic activities, while in West Africa women tend to be more economically active in urban spaces. Women have often been excluded from formal political power, but it would be a mistake to regard women as powerless. While formal political life tends to be male-dominated, women are significant actors in lots of ways. For example, the market women in places like Lagos, Nigeria can—and have—shut the entire city down if they want.

Finally, it is worth saying a few words about "civil society," the realm of public life between the household and the state. Many scholars think the characteristics of civil society affect characteristics of the political system. When looking at Western societies, these analysts focus on forms of "associational life" (such as trade unions or church groups) to see how vibrant democracy and political participation might be. But observers of Africa have noted either the lack of such elements or the control of them by the ruling political elites.

Many argue that African countries will not have successful democracy without a strong, independent civil society. But people such as Célestin Monga, a brilliant Cameroonian scholar I knew in grad school, argue that Africa has long enjoyed active civil societies at the informal and grassroots level. They have effectively challenged

state power across Africa, but are largely ignored by Western scholars. Monga says we need to pay attention to the alternative and informal social engagement and resistance, such as literature and music, which represent indigenous African civil society. Given my own experiences with global DIY punk, I think he is spot on. Just check out the work of such diverse African musicians as Fela Kuti, Papa Wembe, Thomas Mapfumo, and National Wake.

The Practice of Power

When examining how power is practiced in Africa, the concept of "neopatrimonialism" is very useful. The term is inspired by the German sociologist Max Weber, who argued that modern governments developed "legal-rational" bureaucracies that replaced traditional forms of rule based on charismatic leaders and patronage networks. The concept of neopatrimonialism recognizes that patronage and personal rule haven't disappeared, but continue alongside the existence of formal bureaucratic institutions. Against the backdrop of formal structures (such as government offices, bureaucracies, and so forth), political power actually functions through a complex web of patron-client relations that extracts resources from the state and redistributes them in a parasitic-like relationship (much like the way colonialism worked). This produces a situation where African politics is characterized by personal rule and the personalization of politics, patronage, the lack of distinction between public and private realms, institutional weakness, coexistence of bureaucratic and informal politics, and corruption. This may seem like lots to take in, but it is fairly straightforward once we recognize it in action.

Generally speaking, government officials are appointed for their loyalty, not their merit, and use their position of power to enrich themselves and their network of supporters. This is what is meant by the patron-client relationship. It isn't just about personal enrichment, one has to make sure resources are flowing through the networks between patrons and clients, or the system breaks down (e.g. "I pledge my support to you in return for favoritism. If you fail to keep up your end of the bargain, I will find someone else to support"). African leaders sit atop an enormous and complex network of patronage and they spend a great deal of time and energy keeping that system stable, while fighting off competitors.

Some African leaders, such as Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire and Félix Houphouët-Boigny of Côte d'Ivoire, were masterful tacticians of neopatrimonialism. In fact, African neopatrimonial systems have tended to be quite stable, but this is usually at the cost of economic development. After all, the whole system is based on extraction and redistribution. Thus, corruption is neither the result of the breakdown of governance nor an unfortunate cultural or character flaw, it is a central part of how political power is practiced in Africa. At the same time, the way power is practiced at the individual level has led to the personalization of politics—it really is about who you know—as well as the development of personal rule: "I'm going to cling to what power I have because everything depends on that, both for me and my network of clients."

This has resulted in both weak states and the coexistence of formal and informal politics. Suppose I need a permit to do research or open a restaurant in Uganda. I need to go through the bureaucratic bullshit of applying for that permit, but I also need to know who has the "real" power and work with them. Government officials—from clerks to police officers—"abuse" their positions because that is how they get resources. Then they're expected to redistribute those resources up and down the networks of patronage that characterize neopatrimonial systems.

Let me be clear here. Africans did not invent these practices. They are products of historic developments, some of which existed before colonialism, most of which were exacerbated and entrenched within colonialism, and then more so after independence. One can find similar practices all over the world, including your own hometown. The point is that neopatrimonial systems are at the core of political life across Africa, despite great variation in manifestation, strength, stability, and degree.

For example, the neopatrimonial system in Ghana is quite different than the one in Tanzania. But to understand and navigate both systems requires an awareness and appreciation of how systems of patronage and practices of resource redistribution work. My friend, the late Patrick Chabal, co-wrote a book called *Africa Works* which argued—correctly, I believe—that even though many Western observers find neopatrimonial systems frustrating and distasteful, they actually provide stability and a degree of accountability. They "work," but it is important to always ask who they are working for.

Given the ubiquity of neopatrimonialism, you might conclude that political parties and elections don't really matter much in Africa, and you'd be correct. In most African countries, political parties are merely the institutional creation of specific political elites and their patronage networks, with little to no ideological meaning. As a citizen of, say, Kenya, I'm not going to vote for the socialist party (there's not one), but for the party that will send resources in my direction (like a new school in my village or fixing the roads in my neighborhood).

Colonialism represented a major assault on established African gender relations and women's power.

Some observers argue that neopatrimonialism is incompatible with democracy, pointing to the numerous examples of where democratically elected officials act as patrons with the voters as clients. In those cases, elected officials are less concerned with developing national policies than distributing patronage handouts. (See Chinua Achebe's great novel *A Man of the People* for a nice fictional account of this). Voters use "electoral blackmail" to ensure that they and their communities are rewarded for their electoral loyalty. Rather than challenging neopatrimonial practices, elections have often strengthened them.

Many African leaders have resisted holding elections for fear of destabilizing their rule; however, most have stage-managed elections to ensure their victory. After all, winning an election supposedly bestows legitimacy. In fact, for several decades now, Western powers have demanded that African countries hold elections as a condition for receiving loans and financial aid.

This has helped develop "hybrid regimes" across Africa, where most of today's African governments contain both democratic and authoritarian elements. These hybrid regimes tend to hold democratic elections, but they are regularly manipulated to insure victory for the incumbents. They provide civil and political liberties in theory, but regularly ignore them in practice. They allow oppositional elements in civil society, but undercut their independence and strive to keep them weak. Democratic institutions exist but are hollowed out by continuing practices of patronage. Most of these African regimes are important allies of Western powers, so powerful countries like the U.S., U.K., and France are happy to support their authoritarian practices as long as they continue to keep their democratic window dressing intact.

Readers may be familiar with how governments often consist of executive, legislative, and judicial branches. Structurally, there is wide variation in African political systems, with some countries reflecting their French or British parliamentary tradition—which were usually imposed at the eleventh hour by the departing colonial power—and others emulating the U.S. system or some other innovation.

The actual *type* of government matters little. They are the formal structures behind which the "real" political power is practiced through elaborate patron-client systems and the personalization of power. In general, the executive branch is extremely powerful, the legislative branch is usually either irrelevant and/or an extension of ruling political elites' power, and the judicial branch (the court system) is rarely independent or free, though exceptions certainly exist.

Besides the executive, perhaps the branch that matters most is the military. In Africa, as in most of the world, militaries exist to control the domestic population, not fight external enemies. Since they have guns, it is important to keep them—or at least the leadership—content and close to the fruits of power. If the military is excluded from power and privilege—or they think they might get a better deal from a new leader or even by controlling power themselves—they are likely to engage in a military coup.

Coups used to be rampant in Africa during the 1960s and '70s, and though the frequency has greatly decreased in recent years, they still occur. We should be careful of over-generalizing too much, as some African countries like Botswana have highly professional militaries. But many African rulers spend a great deal of time and energy ensuring that the military is strong enough to keep control over the populace, but is also weak or content enough not to seize power themselves.

The Economic Dimensions of African Politics

Images of extreme poverty are often the first things that pop into people's minds when they think about Africa. This is understandable, since poverty is rampant across Africa and I have personally witnessed more cases of dire poverty than I care to remember, but two things need to be stressed at the outset. First, the continent is incredibly resource-rich, from oil, diamonds, and other minerals to the bountiful crops of cotton, tea, and coffee grown in various parts of Africa. You undoubtedly consume numerous African goods in your daily life and don't even know it. Second, African economies have been some of the best performing in the world for the past decade. One of the reasons Portugal's economy is afloat today is the massive investment that Angola, its former colony, has been pumping into it.

Colonialism was based on extracting resources and forcing Africans to grow cash crops for Western markets. Thus, African economies were largely agriculturally-based export economies. This didn't change much when Africans got their independence. In some cases, the new African leaders tried to nationalize parts of their economy and encourage industrialization. These moves failed for a variety of reasons, including Western hostility and the inhospitability of the capitalist world market.

To oversimplify, by the 1970s Africa was dependent on Western markets to buy their goods, and on international suppliers to provide food, finished goods, and vital resources like oil. When the oil crisis hit and the commodity markets plummeted, African economies were in free-fall. When the price of copper or coffee fell, African countries whose economies were entirely dependent on selling those products (like Zambia and Rwanda) were in crisis. So they started borrowing lots of money to stay afloat.

By the 1980s, most African countries were so far in debt they were unable to even pay back the interest. The reasons were a combination of African mismanagement and corruption on the one hand and, on the other, the structural inequalities that were built into the global capitalist system. The global powers-that-be, namely the Western-controlled World Bank and International Monetary Fund, required African governments to radically change their economies (and societies) by opening up to foreign investors while slashing government spending on social programs (such as health and education) in order to pay back the interest on their loans. This was called "structural adjustment" and was extremely controversial. Like many, I think it was an utter failure, though many others defended it then and today, including my co-author Pierre.

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THE REMEMBERABLES • TROPHY WIFE • TRY THE PIE • UPSET • VAGABON • WORRIERS

In Africa, as in most of the world, militaries exist to control the domestic population, not fight external enemies.

So how did African economies experience their recent growth? First, under public pressure the West wrote off massive amounts of African debt. Many governments were spending half of their budgets on debt repayment, but debt levels were not going down since they were just covering the interest. In the 1990s, Africa was paying the West around *eight times* the amount they were receiving in aid (chew on that for a few moments). Second, commodities prices started going up again, which was a huge boost to certain African economies. Third, China started investing heavily in Africa. All this has been great news for Africa, but the fundamental structure of their economic situation has not changed. If commodity prices tank (they are starting to) or China's investment dries up (it is already decreasing) or their debt mushrooms again (it is creeping back up), Africa's economic renaissance will be short-lived.

Conflict and War

In addition to poverty, many people equate Africa with conflict. Pictures of African young men with guns are common in the Western media. Interestingly, Africa has had very few wars between its countries. Wars of secession are also relatively rare across the continent. This is somewhat surprising given the arbitrariness of the colonially created borders. But the most common form of conflict in Africa stems from competing elements trying to seize state power within a country, rather than groups trying to break away or fighting with other countries.

There are many reasons why conflicts emerge and each case is unique. But these wars were almost always political conflicts, driven by the desire of different groups to control the state, and thus gain access to power and wealth. It is no coincidence that many rebel groups have been led by former elites that have been cut off from the privileges they once enjoyed and are fighting to get them back.

In other cases, armed groups come from a region that has been marginalized politically and economically. More often than not, and like elsewhere in the world, the soldiers are marginalized young men whose options for social and economic advancement are quite limited. That doesn't mean all young men will necessarily turn to violence, but the convergence of other factors—from social advancement promised by rebel leaders to economic gain to the lucrative global trade in illicit goods—add to the pressures they feel. But these factors are rarely the cause of the conflicts themselves.

In the end, most of Africa's conflicts are a manifestation of African politics, particularly neopatrimonial practices where control of the state means access to wealth and power. For many with no recourse through the formal political system, the use of violence becomes a viable option for advancing one's political and personal agenda. One of my frustrations with the Western media is that they tend to portray African wars as defying political logic, but these conflicts are almost always highly political in nature.

Hopefully this simplified discussion helps make events in Africa more understandable. Much of this might even look familiar since differences largely exist in degrees—one can see forms of neopatrimonialism practiced around the world. In both Kenya and Gabon, the current presidents are sons of former presidents, just as the U.S. has a dynasty of Bushes. Cronyism exists everywhere, from state legislatures in the U.S. to the global sports associations such as the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

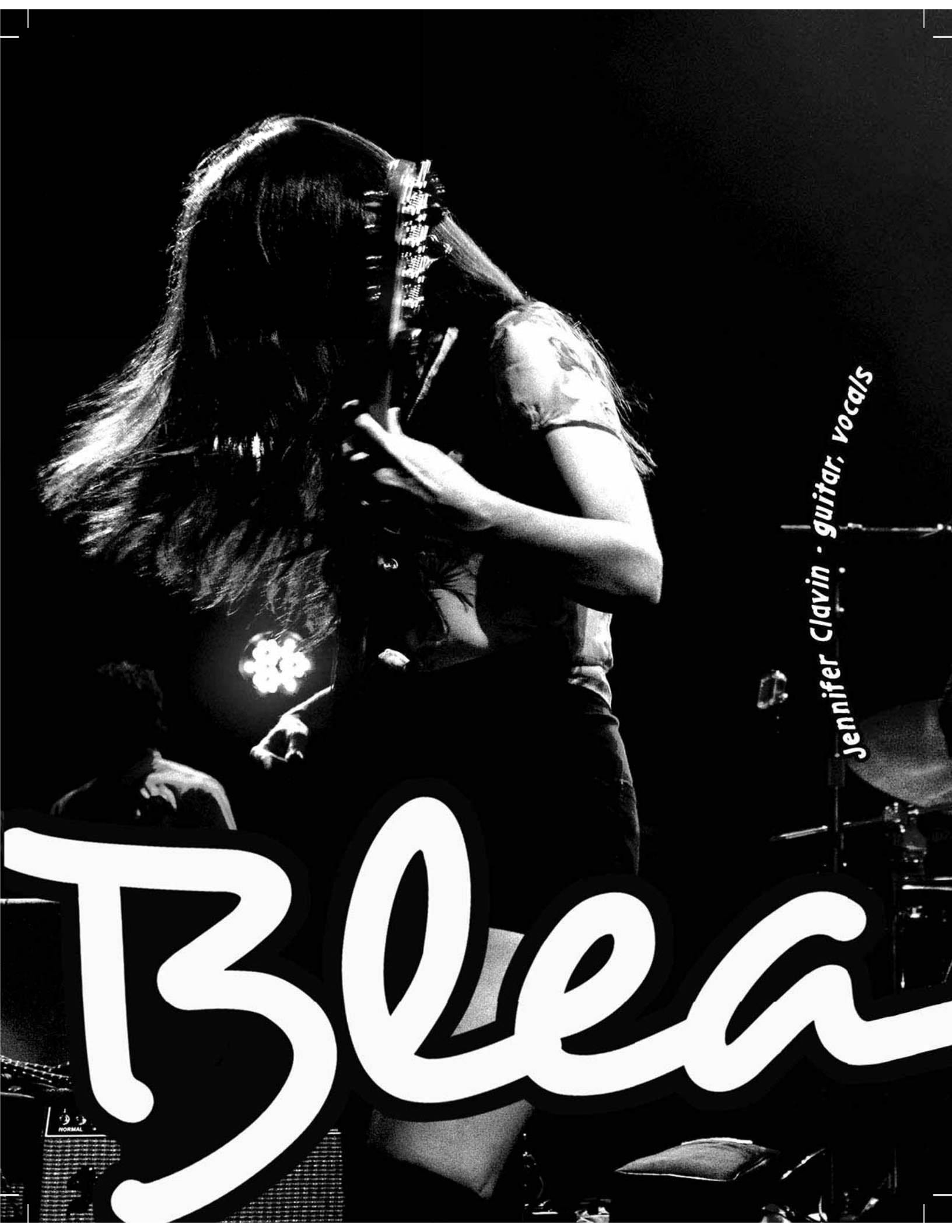
Moreover, conflicts emerge in Africa for the same reasons they do elsewhere. African economies are not that different from other economies; the crushing debt crisis that Africa has endured is the result of the same predatory bank loaning practices you have to deal with, which are an inherent aspect to modern global capitalism.

Global capitalism has a history, and part of that history concerns how the West became wealthy and powerful by exploiting and underdeveloping Africa and other parts of the world. But you can see those same historical developments right here in the U.S., impacting rural regions and marginalized urban neighborhoods.

By recognizing the similarities and connections between our lives and those in Africa, we can find a better understanding of how political and economic power is played out globally and locally—and impacts all of our lives.

SHORT BOOK LIST

A Man of the People, Chinua Achebe (1966)
Africa Works, Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz (1999)
Dancing in the Glory of Monsters, Jason K. Stearns (2011)
Exterminate All the Brutes, Sven Lindqvist (1992)
How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, Walter Rodney (1972)
Inside African Politics, Pierre Englebert and Kevin Dunn (2013)
King Leopold's Ghost, Adam Hochschild (1998)
Nervous Conditions, Tsitsi Dangarembga (1988)
The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born, Ayi Kwei Armah (1968)
When Victims Become Killers, Mahmood Mamdani (2001)


Jennifer Clavin - guitar, vocals

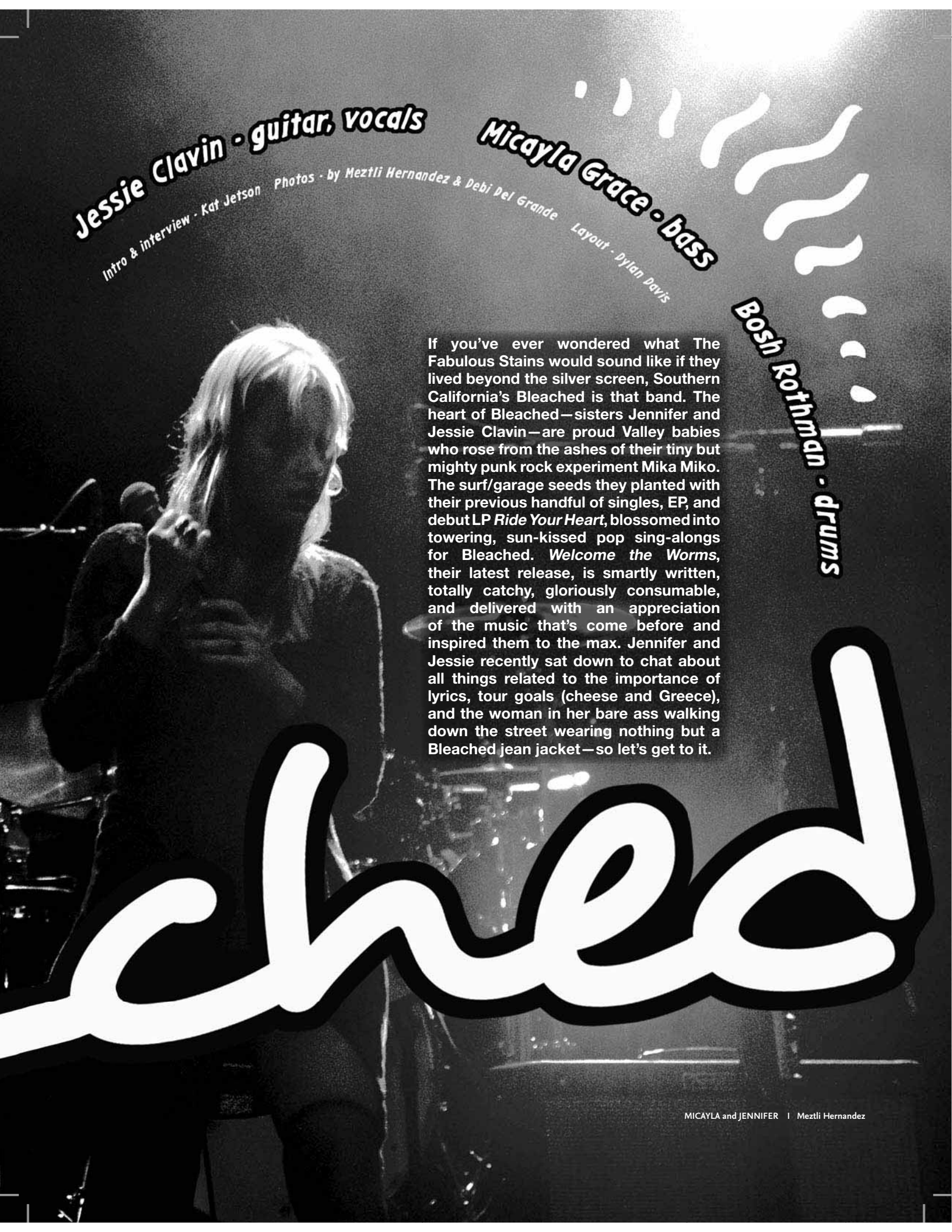
Bleached

Jessie Clavin - guitar, vocals

Micayla Grace - bass

Bosh Rothman - drums

Intro & interview - Kat Jetson Photos - by Meztli Hernandez & Debi Del Grande Layout - Dylan Davis



If you've ever wondered what The Fabulous Stains would sound like if they lived beyond the silver screen, Southern California's Bleached is that band. The heart of Bleached—sisters Jennifer and Jessie Clavin—are proud Valley babies who rose from the ashes of their tiny but mighty punk rock experiment Mika Miko. The surf/garage seeds they planted with their previous handful of singles, EP, and debut LP *Ride Your Heart*, blossomed into towering, sun-kissed pop sing-alongs for Bleached. *Welcome the Worms*, their latest release, is smartly written, totally catchy, gloriously consumable, and delivered with an appreciation of the music that's come before and inspired them to the max. Jennifer and Jessie recently sat down to chat about all things related to the importance of lyrics, tour goals (cheese and Greece), and the woman in her bare ass walking down the street wearing nothing but a Bleached jean jacket—so let's get to it.

MICAYLA and JENNIFER | Meztli Hernandez

Kat: I recently read an article describing your new album *Welcome the Worms*, and it said something to the effect of, "Bleached ditch the surfboards." Did you ever actually consider yourself a surf band?
Jennifer: In the beginning—because The Ventures are one of my favorite bands—I was trying to imitate that guitar tone and sound. I was playing with a Fender. So I feel like not knowingly in the beginning, but since then we've kind of changed.
Jessie: Yeah we totally ditched the surfboard. But the first few 7"s you can hear it. Super reverbed out. Early Bleached sounds a bit like Redd Kross.
Jennifer: But then there was a point where people were bringing it up more. We've gone through that and now we're kind of over it.
Jessie: You get tagged as a surf band and it sticks. California. Girls playing surf style.
Kat: Surf is such a niche sound, and the fans of that genre are so into it that they tend to get upset when you grow or change. You can still love it, but that doesn't mean you need to stay on the same path. Also, you'd be stuck wearing matching outfits.
Jessie: That's it. That's why we're not in a surf band—we don't have the matching outfits.
Kat: You can wear capes.
Jessie: Jen wore a cape in a Mika Miko video.
Jennifer: I used to be really into capes.
Jessie: You were!
Kat: How did the recording process differ between your first album *Ride Your Heart* and your latest record?
Jessie: The first one took a month total. The second record was about two months. For *Ride Your Heart*, we had a bunch of demos that we had recently written all the way to when we first had started Bleached. Even after recording our early 7"s we had some leftover demos, so we recorded those. They ended up on the first LP. We would record bits and pieces but we couldn't do the live band thing because it was just us and a drummer. We did pre-production, but it was mellow; going in at night for an hour or two.
Kat: That's how you do it when you don't have time. It's not like you're in a studio for four months that's covered in shag carpet.
Jennifer: I wish! For this record, we spent hours each day on pre-production.
Kat: So it was like a job?
Jennifer: It was torture for me at the time. But looking back on it, that was one of the most fun parts. I didn't understand how important that part was for this record until we were recording. Then I was like, "I wish I had figured this out in pre-production." But we also have a live band this time.
Kat: Can we talk about your *For the Feel* EP? The two cover songs on it are so different. One of them is a Coasters song and the other one is...
Jessie: The Damned.
Kat: Those two very different cover choices speak to your wide range of influences.
Jennifer: Usually when I hear a song that I know I want to cover, it happens immediately. It has something to do with the vocal range and the guitar sounds.
Jessie: It's like, "This sounds familiar. We've done a song like this before."
Jennifer: Or I think that I can probably sing it pretty good.
Jessie: There were covers before that we tried and realized that we couldn't do them.
Kat: Do you have a "for instance"?
Jennifer: We were gonna do this Dwight Twilley song called, "Looking for the Magic." It's such a good song. And we did try doing it. We probably should've just changed the key and maybe it would've worked. With The Damned song, we were on tour and Jessie was DJing it. I knew we had to do it.
Jessie: It's funny because before Jen even said that, I was going to suggest we cover it.
Jennifer: The Coasters one… I had actually heard the Rolling Stones version first. I didn't even know it was a Coasters song originally until I looked it up. It actually worked better because we ended up doing it in the key of the Coasters' version.
Kat: Covers are tricky. Sometimes people try to make them sound exactly like the original.
Jennifer: I think that's a bad idea. It probably works a bit to our advantage because I'm a female singer covering a male singer.
Jessie: Totally. Like, "What would this song sound like if a girl sang it?"
Kat: And sometimes covers can sound better than the original. Dolly Parton— she's lovely—but The White Stripes version of "Jolene" is so much better.
Jessie: I didn't even know!
Kat: I like that he doesn't change the lyrics from, "please don't take my man" to "please don't take my woman."
Jennifer: I love when bands do that. When The Raincoats covered "Lola" by The Kinks and they didn't change it to "she." Also, if you're not even thinking about what the word "man" means—it's the way that it sounds. I feel like that could totally change the whole song. It was kind of put there for a reason.
Kat: Also, woman is two syllables. You're already messing with it.
Jessie: Right, right.
Kat: Have you gone on tour for months at a time?
Jessie: Jen and I have been on tour together. I think I was still in high school when we went out with Mika Miko. We'll be on tour when this new record comes out. We'll go over to Europe. We've done lots of month tours.
Kat: Did you accomplish what you set out to do with Mika Miko?
Jennifer: Yeah. Beyond.
Jessie: It's true; it was beyond.
Jennifer: We had no goals for that band and then it's like, "Oh, we're going to Japan."
Kat: What are the goals for Bleached? What's the pinnacle?
Jessie: I was thinking about this the other day. With Mika Miko it was so punk—trying to figure out where to practice, whose house we can do it at. And now with Bleached, I look at it more like my career. I want to be able to have my own recording studio—a place where I can go and write music. I didn't realize that was something I wanted to do as a kid. Now that I've done it for so long, the goal is to be able to do Bleached and tour. I also want to have time to write. And be able to support myself.
Kat: Inevitably, there'll be someone who thinks you sold out because you're making money.
Jennifer: There's always gonna be people that think that. It's like, "So you expect me to be poor for you?"
Kat: Speaking of making money, have you ever been asked to write something for television or a commercial?
Jennifer: We have been asked to try and write something, but it's never been used. But then our personal songs have been used. In the *Poltergeist* remake, they used "Next Stop." It was a really long scene. The girl is looking at her phone with...
Jessie: …the record cover on her iPhone.
Jennifer: Something's about to possess her and all the lights turn off but the record is still playing. Our song is playing in the first scary, pop-out part of the movie.
Jessie: A big goal for me is scoring music. But for Bleached I think it would be selling out large venues. I look up to Haim a lot. They're girls from the Valley and now they're totally playing successful shows.
Kat: It's not so hard to imagine. A band like Haim or Best Coast, who used to play at The Smell (small, L.A. venue), are on *SNL* and touring all over the world.
Jessie: It's true.
Kat: Are there any L.A. bands that you're totally in love with right now?
Jennifer: No Parents, who are going on tour with us. A lot of local bands are our friends, too. So if we're not playing together, we're hanging out. And there's a lot of mutual respect.
Jessie: There are our friends in Pangea and Allah-Las who are really big in Greece right now.
Kat: I've heard of big in Germany, but never big in Greece. I actually don't even know a single band that's played there.
Jessie: I was a little jealous. I was like, "Wait a second…."
Kat: You've done a ton of videos. Do you do so many because you have friends who can make them and you have the accessibility?
Jennifer: Partly because we did have the accessibility, but we would've done them anyways. They just wouldn't have looked so professional. Jess and I grew up with our dad who was working movie post-production at Universal, so we were introduced to the film world at a young age. I think we just fell in love with that whole side of Hollywood. I love what a video does for a song and its visual story. I think the more the better.
Kat: Have people told you how they find out about you? A video, live show....
Jessie: My friend was over here the other day and he already knows about our band but I'm assuming this is one way people could find out about us—he told us there's this *L.A. Weekly* article "Top 10 bands from the

Valley." It's cool because The Weirdos are on it.

Kat: How do you hear from fans?

Jennifer: People tweet at us or leave Instagram comments.

Jessie: Jen's more into the Instagram stuff. I'm slowly trying to get into that world. We both had a conversation the other day and I realized that I have to get into that world, but it gives me a little anxiety.

Jennifer: My favorite thing now is Snapchat. I feel that's the most fun way to talk to fans. And it expires in twenty-four hours. You can make a really quick post and everyone sees it.

Kat: I read an interview not so long ago with Stevie Nicks and she was lamenting the fact that there's no mystery anymore with musicians because of the online presence. My feelings on this kind of oscillate and I haven't decided if I love the accessibility or I wish it were less. How do you feel about it?

Jennifer: I feel like classic rock'n'roll bands can't exist anymore because a big part of their allure was the mystery and the build up of them being untouchable. Now that there are 24/7 updates, it takes away from that.

Kat: Right. You don't want Keith Richards talking like, "Having some eggs this morning." I mean, I love that stuff is happening and changing, but it is a fine line.

Jennifer: I feel it's the same with classic movie stars or models like Marilyn Monroe and Bridget Bardot. I'm pretty sure they would've never been as famous and classic if it was how it is today. Also, you can see every part of the person now. Those classic rock stars—they'd just present the best picture of themselves.

Jessie: Now it's like, "Just woke up! Eating cereal."

Kat: Part of it is good, though, because people can relate.

Jennifer: You have to keep up with the times or you're gonna regret things and have a chip on your shoulder about it.

Kat: Is the person on the cover of your *For the Feel* EP—the woman walking down the street in her bare ass and wearing a Bleached jacket—someone you know?

Jennifer: That's my friend Kaia.

Kat: Amazing! I know people have asked you about your 7" cover photos before.

Jessie: The first two were just photos we found.

Jennifer: For this one though, I saw a really cool photo and I was like, "Can we imitate it?" We had her walk in the middle of the street with no pants on. Some people think it's my butt, but mine would be too crazy for the cover.

Kat: Does that jacket with the huge Bleached patch on the back really exist, or is it Photoshopped?

Jennifer: It exists. But I don't even know where it is.

Jessie: Where is it? We have a couple of Bleached jackets.

Kat: You could have a girl gang.

Jessie: Total girl gang.

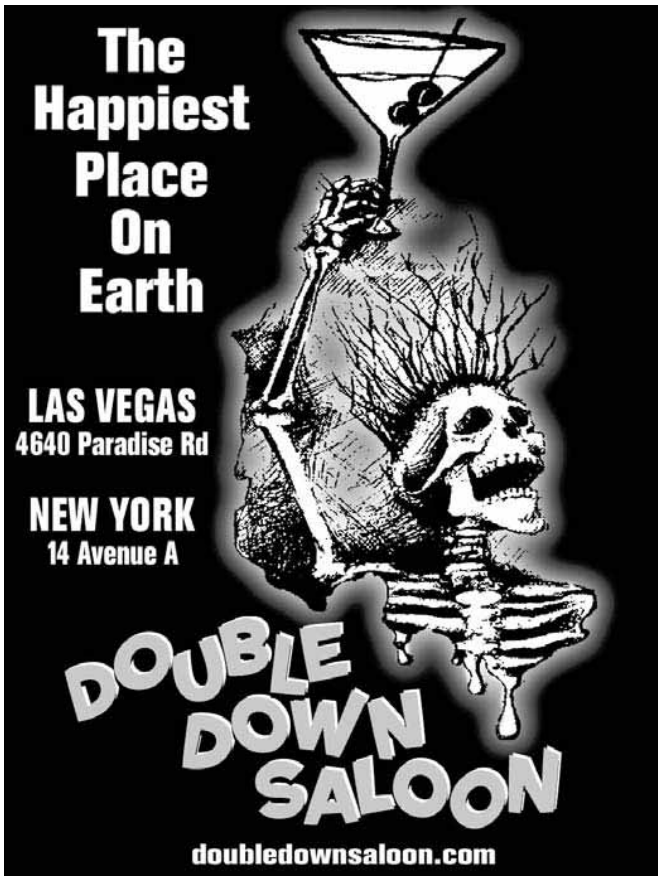
Kat: You need to make some of those patches.

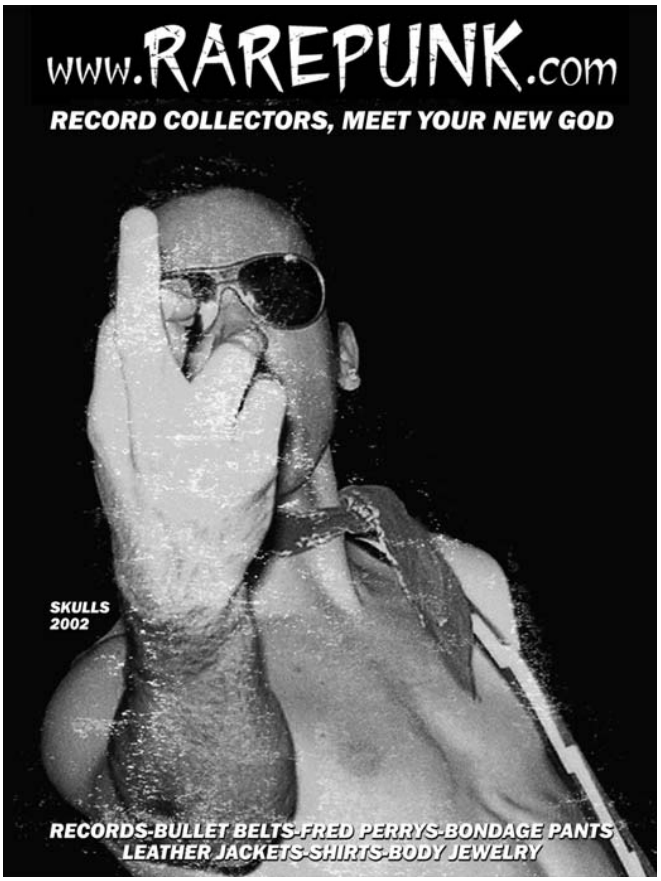
Jessie: That would be so cool. I could totally see us having those.

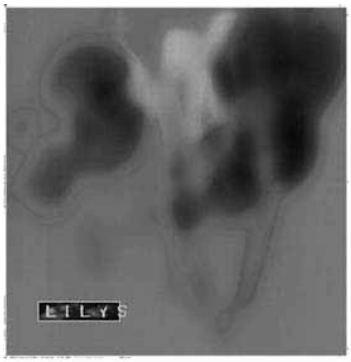
Kat: I realize that it was a different experience in the '80s or whatever—hearing your song on the radio—but have you been somewhere that you've heard your song and you're like, "Oh, that's us!"

Jennifer: I was in H&M or something and I was like, "Oh my god! They're playing my band right now." And all these people are hearing it. Someone decided it was good enough to add to their playlist. I assume there's someone who puts songs together that are motivating and put you in the shopping zone.

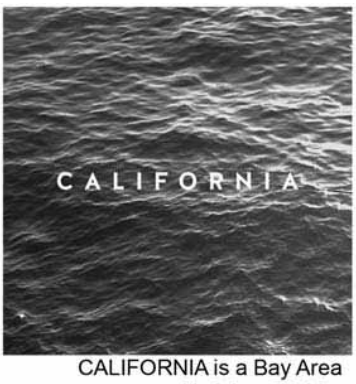
BOSH and JENNIFER I Meztli Hernandez



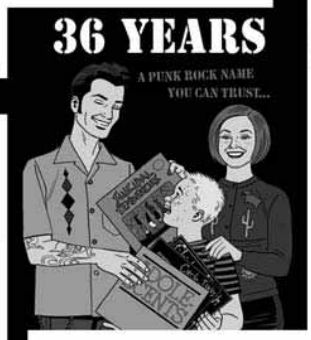




Out of print for twenty years, LILYS' etheric second full-length LP, Eccsame The Photon Band, has become a Shoegaze collector's favorite.



CALIFORNIA is a Bay Area supergroup with Adam Pfahler (drums) from JAWBREAKER, Jason White (guitar & vocals) from GREEN DAY and Dustin Clark (bass) from THE INSIDES.

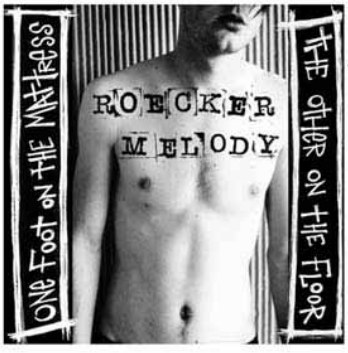


PASS THE DUST... was the only LP released by legendary Dangerhouse Records in late '79-- BLACK RANDY's funky revue-style songs are tight and yet loose, and he is still without peers.

BLACK RANDY AND THE METROSQUAD

"Pass the dust, I think I'm Bowie."

It's hard to categorize ROECKER | MELODY because it's so— like the artists— bipolar, a mash of distortion, power chords, hooks, crooning vocals and unrivaled lyrical content.



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Kat: Bleached: Music for buying clothes.
Jennifer: I guess one time they played a Bleached song at Shea Stadium. The only reason I know is because all these people were tweeting at me.
Kat: The Internet proving its worth!
Jessie: I think that's one of my goals—to be on KROQ. Growing up, it was such an important radio station. I remember when I was younger just feeling like I belong on this station one day.
Kat: You should be! You know Rodney (Bingenheimer), right? He used to be an L.A. institution and he's obsessed with girl bands. You can find him at Canter's every night. Just take him one of your records, I assure you he'll be in love and you'll find yourself on KROQ.
Jennifer: I've seen him there before. He's the guy that drives the old car.
Kat: Yeah, that's him! Do you collect anything?
Jennifer: Records.
Jessie: I collect little toys that I don't open. I used to date this guy who's friends with Brian Setzer and he did the same thing. My boyfriend would get really annoyed, but I was like, "One day, it's gonna be a collector's item." And then when we saw Brian Setzer's room, it was literally the size of my entire apartment filled with unopened toys.
Jennifer: I like to collect flattened pennies. Whenever I see a penny machine, I get really excited.
Kat: On tour, you must see a lot.
Jennifer: Not really. They're so rare. And you have to be at a boardwalk or a mall. We just don't have time to be going somewhere like that.
Kat: People tend to think when you're on tour, you get to see so much.
Jennifer: My mom was saying, "All I want before I die is to go on tour with you guys in Europe." And I was like, "Mom, there's no time to see anything."
Jessie: Mom would somehow figure it out. We'd be at sound check and she'd come back and be like, "Oh, I did this and I met some person. They told us to come by their cheese shop."
Kat: That doesn't sound awful. Are you putting your new album out on vinyl?
Jennifer: Oh, yeah.
Kat: Do you get excited about that?
Jessie: Totally. I only buy vinyl. I remember I used to ditch school at Hollywood High to go to Headline Records. I think I bought records not even knowing what the band would sound like. I just thought it looked cool, and I knew that they had maybe played a show with a certain band or were friends with another band that I liked.
Kat: If you could interview one person alive or dead, who would they be and what would you ask?
Jessie: I love this question, but I don't know right now. I'm gonna think of it later and I'm gonna have to call you. We know this. Our dad plays a game when we're at a restaurant or whatever. If there's an extra chair he's like, "Who would you want to be sitting here?" It would always be a fun thing.
Jennifer: I'd always end up choosing my grandma. I think I would like to interview Otis Redding. I would wanna ask him where he gets all his soul. And I'd let him know how beautiful his voice sounds, and how insanely famous his song "(Sittin'on) The Dock of the Bay" became because he died before it came out.
Jessie: I'd want to interview Marc Bolan. I grew up listening to T. Rex. It's kind of easy these days to look up footage of people who've passed, but I feel like there isn't too much on Marc Bolan. I would for sure ask him about his songwriting process—how he writes a song.
Kat: Do you have a favorite lyric of your own? And do you have a favorite lyric of someone else's?
Jennifer: So many favorite lyrics.
Jessie: I feel like I started playing music more and not writing lyrics, so when something does pop out I get really excited. I wish I was more like Jen. She writes all the lyrics, and I've never written one lyric in Bleached, which is really crazy to think. I will say that I do remember going through a breakup one time and hearing Jen writing lyrics to a new song and I was bawling.
Jennifer: Really? What song was it?
Jessie: It may even be a song that we haven't even recorded. It may just be a demo. But I remember being so emotional and it hit me so hard. So I'm a fan of my sister's lyrics.
Jennifer: One of my favorites is when Stevie Nicks sings, "Players only love you when they're playing." It just feels really empowering.
Kat: She's telling it like it is. You know she was pissed.
Jennifer: Totally. But she's singing it in this beautiful voice. Every time I hear it, I'm probably annoyed by some guy. Then she says it and I'm like, "You're right. What am I getting mad about? Fuck that guy!" As for one of mine, it's hard to pick.
Jessie: I feel like I should be picking one of yours.
Jennifer: There's another—I really like this one Creedence Clearwater Revival lyric. He says, "I came into town, a one night stand, looks like my plans fell through." He's seeing himself as a one-night stand to the town. One-night stands are so meaningless, and I feel like he's talking less of himself in a way, but then saying, "Looks like my plans fell

"THAT'S WHY WE'RE NOT IN A SURF BAND - WE DON'T HAVE THE MATCHING OUTFITS."

JENNIFER and JESSIE I Debi Del Grande

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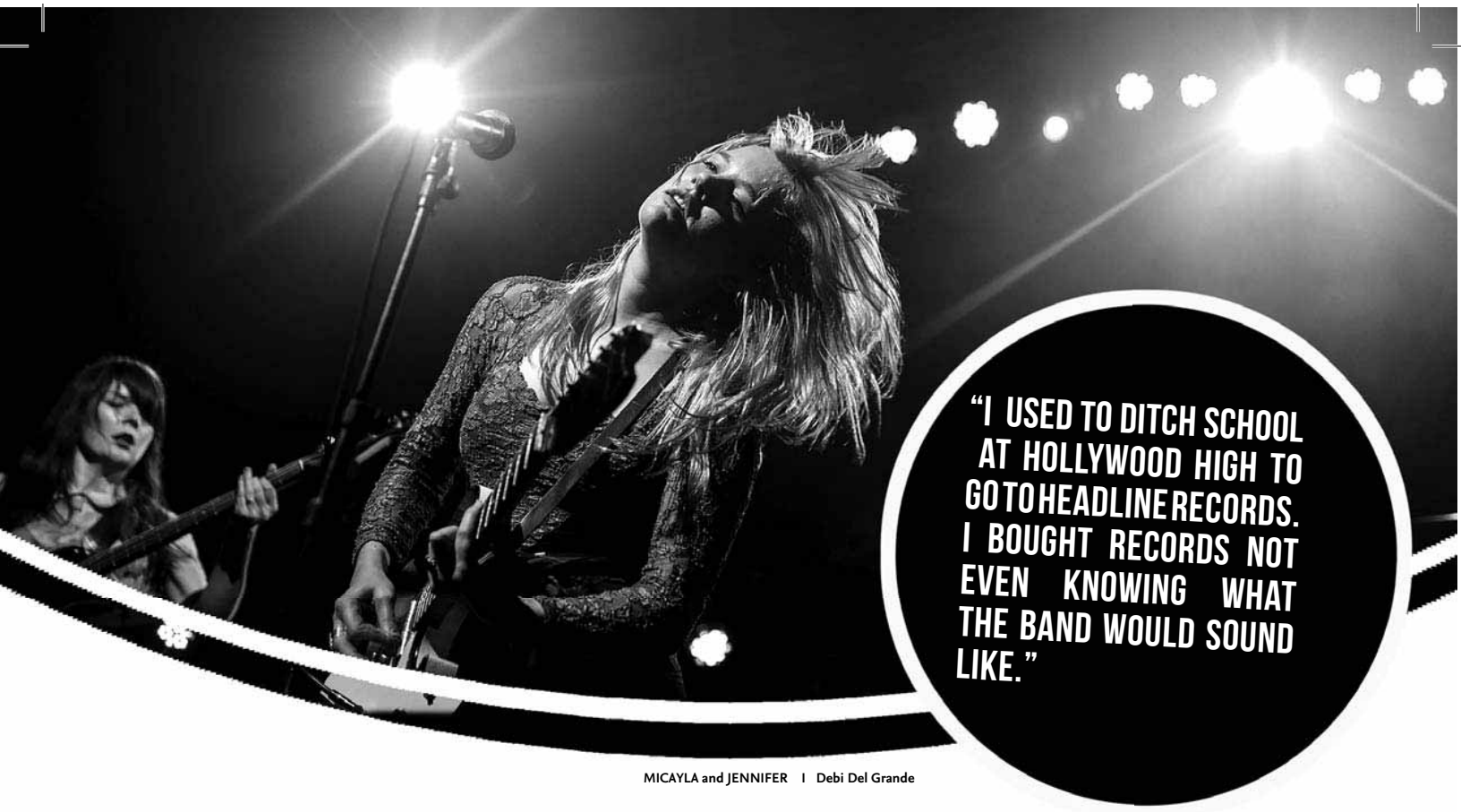

"I USED TO DITCH SCHOOL AT HOLLYWOOD HIGH TO GO TO HEADLINE RECORDS. I BOUGHT RECORDS NOT EVEN KNOWING WHAT THE BAND WOULD SOUND LIKE."

MICAYLA and JENNIFER I Debi Del Grande

through." I guess he ended up falling in love with the town for whatever reason. I just have this whole mental image of what that's like. Driving down Highway 1, passing Big Sur, stopping at a bar, you see this band playing, and you're like, "I like it here. I think I might stay for a little bit."

Kat: There's a romance to it. And it's amazing that someone can capture that with a lyric.

Jessie: I think it's cool, too, when people name check cities and streets and years. Jen does that on this new record and it's really cool. She mentions street names in L.A., so you get a visual and you're like, "I've been on that street. I've hung out there. Or I used to party there."

Jennifer: Or you haven't been there and you want to.

Kat: When I was living in Connecticut I'd hear that Go-Go's song "This Town" and she sang something about the boulevard and I'm like, "I want to be in L.A." We don't have boulevards in Connecticut.

Jessie: Right. I think it might just be a West Coast thing.

Kat: On Lana Del Rey's new record she name checks Pico Boulevard. And I'm like, "I know Pico!"

Jennifer: Of all streets, she says Pico Boulevard.

Kat: I guess she just needed a street with two syllables.

Jennifer: I'll bet there was a list of streets to choose from.

Jessie: Totally. "What if I just said Pico Boulevard?"

Jennifer: I thought of a lyric of our own. It's from our new record, the song that is a lot about L.A. I say, "So I'm on my own complaining to the mud, but the mud really don't mind." I just had this whole visual idea that I'm bummed out about something—on Mulholland Drive, just talking to the mud. The mud is there to listen to me. It doesn't matter; it's not gonna judge me, and it's gonna let me hear my own thoughts.

Kat: You know that's gonna be someone's favorite lyric.

Jennifer: I hope so, yeah. I feel like going back to the comment about Stevie Nicks and the mystery and stuff. Sometimes lyrics were the closest you were going to get to someone in a band. Now that we're losing the mystery a little, I hope that lyrics aren't overlooked.

Kat: Do you give people the lyrics, or do you have them figure out the lyrics on their own?

Jennifer: I always provide the lyrics because I've seen in the past when people try to figure them out, they totally get them wrong and then they put them up on the Internet. I also get it when you want to let someone figure them out because they're usually figuring them out for something they're going through. That's kind of cool because then they end up liking the lyric more.

Jessie: Jen and I were listening to the radio and some song came on. I realized that I was getting older because I was like, "I wish these lyrics were clearer." That's totally something our dad would say. We grew up with punk where you don't usually understand what they're saying. I don't mean all punk, but a majority of it. Now I'm so into it hearing what people are saying.

Kat: Do you have a favorite summer or winter album? An album that's so seasonal…

Jennifer: I just moved and having been listening to The Breeders *Last Splash*, so that's my moving-into-new-house album.

Jessie: Painting walls or redecorating is Jimi Hendrix, for sure. And my summer album that's also kind of my year-round album is *T. Rex*.

Jennifer: I was actually listening to a lot of T. Rex this summer. And my winter album is totally The Cure's *Disintegration*.

Kat: Like you were saying, with Mika Miko it was more punk and maybe not everyone could hear or understand the lyrics, but now with Bleached—and especially this new record—are you writing lyrics with the intention that people are going to hear and pay more attention?

Jennifer: Yeah, for sure. When I was in Mika Miko, I was almost embarrassed to write lyrics.

Kat: You didn't have confidence quite yet.

Jennifer: Exactly. So we would find subjects to write around that, and make it super vague so that the listener would have to decide what we were singing about. I liked that because I feel it made it more personal for the listener. With Bleached, I have this 180-degree flip and I'm just gonna be really honest with my lyrics. So honest. With this new record, I got even more honest than *Ride Your Heart*, which I didn't know was possible.

Kat: That's got to be rewarding.

Jennifer: Jessie, like when you were saying that I was writing a song and it was making you bawl. There have been people who have said *Ride Your Heart* helped them get through what they were going through. So even just one person telling me that is enough for me to realize that what I'm doing is worth doing.

WESTERN SETTINGS

Western Settings is a (punkish) (pop) punk band from San Diego, Calif. It is the kind of band that keeps getting better, that you'll catch yourself listening to or singing along with again and again. The instrumentals are energized and melodic, with influences running the gamut, and the uniquely listenable, gruff vocals deliver often *sentimental* lyrics. When I moved from Denver to Los Angeles, Western Settings' *Yes It Is*—which I was already frequently listening to and in love with—was the first record I bought on wax. Their next EP *Old Pain* was even better.

The tagline of La Escalera Records, guitarist Will's label and home to their EP, is: "Without each other we have nothing!" At its core, the deep connection people have to this band is clear to me: we have each other. This is due in part to their lyrics, and in part to them; if you have met these guys even once, there's a good chance they already feel like friends. If you haven't met them, their records can still make you feel that way.

Western Settings is four guys who eat burritos and make good songs—and are the biggest sweethearts you'll ever meet besides Suge Knight.

INTERVIEW BY MADELINE BRIDENBAUGH AND TODD TAYLOR
INTRODUCTION BY MADELINE BRIDENBAUGH
PHOTOS BY RACHEL MURRAY FRAMINGHEDDU
LAYOUT BY ERIC BASKAUSKAS

Todd: Let's start off really basic. Where did you guys come from before you came to San Diego, or if you are a San Diego native?

Ricky: I kind of grew up all over the place, but I would say I'm a San Diego native. I've lived there for ten years, now. My dad was in the military growing up. I was born in North Carolina. Then I moved to St. Louis, Arizona, Virginia, California. All over.

Dylan: Yeah, I was kind of similar—kind of lived all over but I think mostly in Pennsylvania and New York before I moved out here. I just moved out a little under two years ago from upstate New York.

Ricky: We found Dylan on Craigslist.

Adam: Casual encounters. [laughter]

Ricky: The only successful thing that has ever happened on Craigslist, probably. It was really weird. He hit me up and we met up at Luigi's Pizzeria.

Dylan: Yeah, it was definitely like, "Looking for someone who wants to play punk. You must be okay with sleeping on floors." I was like, "Yeah. Totally, I have done that since I was sixteen so this will be perfect."

Adam: I've been in San Diego for fifteen years. I lived in L.A. for six months. I went to the Musicians Institute for recording engineering and I absolutely hated it. Everybody in my classes was like twenty-one and I wasn't at the time. Everybody going out after class, and I went home and played AOL Instant Messenger.

Ricky: I remember doing that as like a kid in the basement, sneaking my parents' whiskey and being in chat message rooms. Drinking whiskey by myself. [laughter]

Adam: So I moved down to San Diego and worked different jobs, played in a couple different bands but none of them really came to fruition until I was in a band called Prosthetic Arms. Then I met all these jerks and here we are today. It's been a long time.

Will: I was born and raised in San Diego.

Ricky: Golden Hill. The mean streets. [laughter]

Will: Yeah, Golden Hills. GH '26. That was the gang that was there.

Todd: Will, has anyone ever told you that you look like Bill Stevenson (Descendents, All)?

Will: No, I haven't had that one before. I always get the dude from Staind. [laughter] You know, some other bald dude with a soul patch.

Ricky: You just gave Will his first compliment. [laughter] No one has ever complimented him before.

Dylan: A lot of the time they [Will and Adam] just get compared to each other.

Will: Yes, all the time. Every now and then after practice we'll go to this bar down the street and I'll walk in and the bartender goes like, "You'll have another pitcher?" [laughs]

Ricky: Or after a show someone will walk up to Will like, "You were great on the drums!" [laughter]

Dylan: Black T-shirts, black Dickies shorts, black glasses.

Will: The two fattest dudes in the band.

Todd: So what do you do day-to-day, how does it interact with the band?

PEOPLE WHO WORK IN KITCHENS ARE DEFINITELY ON THE SAME LEVEL AS PEOPLE PLAYING SHOWS. **WE'RE ALL JUST BROKE AS HELL.**

Ricky: I do bar-backing and I work door as well.
Todd: And you have a history in the military as well.
Ricky: I do, yes. I was in for four years right out of high school. And it was pretty funny. I was playing in a band and it was doing all right, and I was happy with it. The band ended up going on hiatus. My father was in the military and was pushing for me to do it. I kind of freaked out and joined the Marine Corps. Two weeks later I was in boot camp and I just—I did it. I didn't ever deploy. I got super lucky. So I did that, spent two years in D.C., two years in Camp Pendleton, and went to Japan for six months. Came back and got out, started playing music again. It was interesting—definitely not my thing. I wasn't a big fan of it so I am glad it is in the past. Crazy part of humanity.
Dylan: I'm a chef. I cook stuff, it's cool. It's one of those jobs where they are pretty okay with me taking time off to play shows and stuff, as long as I bust my ass when I'm there type deal. And it's a lot of likeminded people as far as like people who work in kitchens are definitely on the same level as people playing shows. We're all just broke as hell. Yeah. That's what I do, I like it. It's cool. It's definitely one of those jobs that I've always said I don't know if I could do anything else because it does afford me some creativity. If I was doing anything else I would probably lose my mind anytime we weren't playing shows. It's definitely something that keeps me active and I can be creative aside from music, which is cool.
Adam: I work at a hotel. I'm a valet, a bellman, and I also drive the shuttle. It's extremely simple, and it's a pretty nice hotel so I make pretty good money. I work all day shifts. You see a lot of weird stuff go down at hotels. Sometimes when you go in to check somebody out, get their bags for them, and they just don't happen to be wearing any clothes and they want you to take pictures of them. [laughter] Provocative positions and you're like, "Well, I'm just here to grab your bags" and she's like, "Well...".
Dylan: "You can grab these bags."
Adam: I'm just like, "I'd rather not." And it's really awkward—like "There has to be a hidden camera in here somewhere. I know I'm going to be on the internet. I gotta sign some sort of form." But you know what is cool? I got to valet Suge Knight one night.
Will: I think Adam called him a sweetheart, right?
Adam: Yeah, he was a sweetheart.
[laughter]
Will: I own a screen printing company in San Diego called B Street Hill Apparel. And I print shirts, day and night, for bands, labels, all of that—you name it. And then the other side where I don't make money, I own a record label called La Escalera Records.
Todd: Which means?
Will: A ladder, like a stepladder.
Todd: We thought it meant stairs.
Will: No, definitely a ladder. But it, uh—it could be stairs.
Ricky: Or a rope ladder. Or a ramp, like a handicap ramp.
Will: Yeah, and that is pretty much how I met these two, Adam and Ricky. They were both in other bands that I put out.
Todd: Why is there an owl in your logo?
Will: Before there was a label there was just a group of musicians along the West Coast who have been helping each other out for years: touring, hosting, throwing shows, and all that stuff. And that's just the mascot they wanted. They started getting tattoos on them. When we decided to do a label it just kind of stuck. Everything is owl-themed.
Ricky: Well, I have this tattoo (shows ladder tattoo on forearm).
Dylan: Yeah, it's also a large penis. You can't see it, but it's in there. [laughter]
Will: Yeah, a lot of people on the West Coast have that. It's mostly people in Success, Bastards Of Young—a lot of the old school bands that everyone was connected to—they started getting that tattoo. There's a ton of them, a good thirty or forty of them out there.
Dylan: But the owner, being yourself, doesn't have one.
Will: I do not have one, 'cause I will not let Ricky tattoo me.
Madeline: I let Ricky tattoo me. [laughs]
Will: You have a Ricky tattoo?
Ricky: She does. She's the latest one. Latest bad decision.
Will: Ricky tends to trade tattoos out. He'll do his name on someone else and vice versa. Drew from Burn Burn Burn has Western Settings tattooed on his ass cheeks.
Ricky: And I have Bx3 tattooed on my ass cheeks. A lot of bad tattoos have come out of my living room, like really bad ones. Some decent ones, mostly bad ones. [laughter]
Madeline: DFMK is on La Escalera, too?
Will: They are. I am putting that out at the beginning of the year. I've been waiting to put something out from them for two years, and they just haven't been ready for it or just didn't have any new material. They finally went in and did a seven-song EP that we are going to put on a 7".
Madeline: And you guys go down to Tijuana and play with them a lot, right?
Will: Yeah, TJ is like our second home. We've played over ten percent of our shows down there. There are a lot of cool bands down there that are also the same—into hosting bands and throwing shows. It's a cool little scene they got going on. There's no money to be made but there's definitely a good following and the kids love it when you bring a bigger band down there.
Ricky: Well, someone told me if I did it for five years then it's thousands that start coming in, so... hold out for a few years. [laughter]
Madeline: Victory Records will pay you a ton of money, or something.
Will: Yeah, totally. But you can go down there in the middle of the week with no-name bands and it will be packed. Then you could host Masked Intruder on a weekend night and there will be forty people there.
Todd: So I know San Diego, the generation before you. Do you guys have any overlap with Fast Crowd, either the group of people or the label?
Will: I know most of the Fast Crowd people. I'm the oldest in the group but I know Davey (Tiltwheel), J. Wang (Dan Padilla, Fast Crowd Records), all those guys for at least a decade. Just recently the two groups have been cross-promoting and getting to know each other. The bands have been playing together.
Ricky: Yeah, we've been doing shows together and they are all awesome. They played amazingly at Fest.
Will: It was our first Fest as attendees and performers, so it was a great time. It was everything that everybody talks about.
Ricky: I was blown away, yeah. I think the coolest part was seeing all the people that you never get to see from all over the place at one time.
Todd: So who does most of the writing for the band, the lyrics?
Ricky: Will and Dylan will write guitar parts sometimes and I'll write lyrics and sing on top of them. There are some times I'll get some stuff going and bring it to them and we'll all start throwing it together and growing in that way. We're all involved pretty heavily in the process.
Todd: Do you guys know all the lyrics to the songs?
Will: I don't, at all. [laughter]
Todd: Do you have any curiosity what the lyrics are about?
Will: I ask most of the time.
Ricky: Answer wisely.
Will: I actually have had to ask, "Hey what's this one about because someone else is asking. I don't care, just let me know." [laughs] But Ricky is definitely a poet with

the lyrics. Makes you think. [Ricky shakes his head]
Ricky: I'm a great poet! I've actually been told I'm the poet of our generation.
Todd: I'm going to read some lyrics and I want him to answer, but...
Adam: This is going to be good.
Dylan: "What the hell are you talking about, what song is that?" [laughter]
Todd: Well, just a reference to start: *The Princess Bride*. Do people know what iocane powder is? Do they get the reference?
Ricky: Well, I love that movie....
Todd: Hold on one second. [To the rest of the band] Did you guys know that?
All: Yes.
Ricky: They actually didn't want to do it. When I told them it had to do with *The Princess Bride,* they were like "Hell no, come on."
Will: Also you have to understand our set list from when we play live does not correspond. It says something random like...
Ricky: Like with "Revhead" on *Yes It Is*, our full-length that just came out earlier this year…
Dylan: "Revhead" is called "Anger."
Adam: It's all so confusing.
Ricky: We always name them as the last thing we do.
Madeline: I actually didn't even get the *Princess Bride* reference.
Ricky: Yeah, there's a couple. "Humiliations Galore" is another one. The "Iocane Powder" one, that song is about a friend I had that got into heroin and it was a bummer. That's what that song is about and then iocane powder is this fictional poison so I was like, "This kind of works." I was watching my friend poison themselves.
Todd: So you also said—a loose quote—that "anger represents everything that I don't believe."
Ricky: So that song, it's talking about how there's no point in being angry or going through life angry and rather being positive, making a conscious effort to not be angry.
Madeline: Does that stem from your time in the military at all?
Ricky: No, a lot of that actually stemmed from when I started hanging out and touring a lot with my last band Beside Myself. I started meeting a lot of these characters up and down the coast—like Aaron Peters, the Bastards Of Young guys, Civil War Rust. That band I was in, we were kind of a bummer band. These guys are all positive and I was like, "Shit man. Well these guys have got something." So we started talking to them and eventually started changing the way I was looking at things and thinking about things.
Todd: Do you feel like you guys as a group are more positive? What are you surrounded by on a day-to-day basis that's not that way?
Ricky: Well, the day-to-day stuff is just the same stuff that everybody—it's normal. Everybody's struggling with work and things that people in normal everyday life are going through. Everybody's got it. Work if you're not happy there, relationship stuff,

not pursuing what you want to be doing, just anything that creates that negativity.
Madeline: The struggle to keep that positive mentality. God, you guys looked so serious when we asked you that question. Like, "They're asking me about lyrics."
Dylan: My system just shut down, like [looks off into space].
Will: Yeah, personally I don't have a lot of negative thoughts or things that surround me that are negative. I'm fortunate that way—and even if I did, I don't think I would spend too much time worrying about it. We strive to get that out of new people we meet, to bring in and share that with other people.
Todd: So, this is a two-part conceptual question. What are you good at fixing, and what are you good at breaking?
Adam: I think we are pretty good at breaking each other down [laughter]. Like when we are writing a song, we are super honest with one another, which I think is really awesome because it keeps us all pretty grounded. We can also tell each other to fuck off and we can hate each other for ten minutes but then, right after that....
Ricky: We're really good at fixing it.
Adam: We're really good at fixing it, exactly! I think that's really important when it comes to being a successful band, 'cause we can tell each other to fuck off, tell them they are playing like shit, and it might get under your skin but it makes songs that much better. I think it brings all of us together.
Ricky: Ladies and gentlemen, Adam Kissell. [laughter] This is why we keep him around.
Adam: I said something! That's all you get!
Will: Mic drop.
Dylan: That's not fair.
Todd: Life's not fair. Be posi about it. [laughter]
Dylan: He took my answer, man. [laughter] Damn. Wait, so what? What am I good at breaking?
Will: [to Dylan] You're good at breaking strings.
Adam: Ricky breaks hearts.
Madeline: [to Ricky] You broke a lot of hearts when you cut your hair, I think.
Ricky: That was crazy. I don't think I've ever had so much attention in my life as when I cut my hair.
Dylan: Will breaks a lot of the [redacted] (redacted) on burritos.
Will: I do, I break a lot of burritos down.
Madeline: No, no, no. Now nothing about paper versus foil. Nothing about that.
Dylan: You just took away like ninety-eight percent of Will's talking points.
Todd: So what are you good at fixing, Will?
Will: I am good at fixing... bands' merch problems. I get so many orders. Bands are like, "I need something yesterday." The artwork's not right so I got to fix it. Then they want it shipped across the country and it needs to be there tomorrow. I somehow manage to get that done most of the time.
Dylan: It's super clutch on tour, too. He handles that business side way better than most of us do.
Will: That is something I need, to stay hands on. Someone needs to drive the boat.
Ricky: You don't want to see a boat that's driven by me. Scary, scary ride. All right, I've been over here thinking really hard about this. I'm really good at breaking my driving record, my finances, anything in my life like that. Destroy it. Easily. Over and over again. I'm good at breaking that, whatever you would call that. I'm good at fixing turmoil in people. It's easy for me to talk to people. I like helping people through stuff or, or if I have bad blood with Will over here because I didn't man the merch table long enough or something....
Will: Yeah, me and Ricky definitely have a love/hate relationship. Mostly love, though. We need it. Without it we wouldn't be where we're at. Or maybe it would be easier for you.
Ricky: We make a good team, man.
Adam: This might be off topic but I'm looking at the Huell Howser (record slipmat on the wall)... pretty amazing stuff.
Todd: Uh, you may have one after the show.
Adam: For reals? Wow. "That's amaaazing!"
Will: I love the Huell Howser death grip that he gives everyone. He doesn't let go, and they're trying to walk away. Like, "No, you aren't going anywhere."
Todd: "That's amazing!" [in Huell's voice]. The world's largest chicharrón!" Then he goes into a cheese puff factory right after that.
Madeline: This might show my age. I have no idea who that is.
Dylan: Yeah, not a clue.
Todd: It's California, he was public access, PBS.
Adam: He just got so excited over the goofiest things. Like a piece of sand in the desert.
Huell Howser voice: "That's amazing!" [laughter]
Todd: And another thing—I know this is not about you guys but—he announces television like it's radio, like you can't fucking see what he's talking about.
Ricky: Very animated.
Madeline: He has that positive mentality.
Todd: All right, I have the hardest question for you guys. You guys ready?
Ricky: I'm sweating over here.
Will: I'm always sweating.
Todd: You guys can collaborate on this answer. How do you identify as a band? [silence]
Ricky: I think that we're just... I mean we don't sing about anything crazy. The songs are just about normal stuff, day-to-day stuff that we've been going through and our friends have been going through.
Will: Yeah, it's all just stories.
Dylan: I think, at least in my mind, we come off as like fucking working class people. Especially our generation right now is just working our asses off to really just get by. And I feel like as a band that's just half the shit that we talk about and it's real life. Just trying to make enough money to go on tour, come back, be broke, make more money to lose it again, you know? [laughter] And that's all anybody's doing. And the scene that we're in, people are saving up their money to come to our shows or somebody else's show and buy a shirt. We're part of that, what everybody's going through. Shit sucks but we're still stoked.
Adam: A majority of bands do the same thing we're doing. We aren't really necessarily doing anything new but what we do comes from our hearts and that's pretty much all that matters. If you're doing what you want to do and having fun and staying positive—that's what we do. It's awesome, though. I love these dudes.
Dylan: Damn, dude. When you drink Jim Beam you get super deep. [laughter]
Adam: Sorry that I have to carry you guys everywhere I go.
Ricky: Ladies and gentlemen… Adam Kissell. [laughter]
Adam: I said that was all I got and that's all I got.
Todd: There's a part two to that question. How do you identify yourself, musically differentiate yourself from other people you're playing with or your influences? I'm not a musician but is it a different guitar tone or do you spend more time structuring songs or putting bridges or using certain equipment or effects? Even in your own head when you're making a song or putting music together. Because it's all—nothing new is made but you're adding to it....
Dylan: You're blowing Will's mind right now. [laughter] Will's like, "Green sauce."
Will: Way too many words there.
Adam: I got an answer. There are pretty big age gaps in this band. Will can be Dylan's dad, let's just say that.
Will: I am Dylan's dad.
Dylan: Papa?
Adam: So I think that we each—every single one of us listens to different types of music. Drive Like Jehu—Will. A lot of the new hardcore stuff [points to Dylan].
Todd: Name something Dylan.
Dylan: Drug Church.
Adam: So I think everything we listen to is so different. We all have different influences, so when we get in there, it all comes together.
Ricky: That's what I was going to go off of, too. When we're in the room writing, everyone kind of just does what they want to do. So we get a structure down, everybody gets on the same page—like what chords we're doing—and then maybe we'll say, "What if you did this?" or "Something like this here." That's about the extent.
Will: We bring in the skeleton of the song and then start putting pieces on it.
Dylan: And I think that is what differentiates us. We're not trying to pinpoint a sound or go in a certain direction, it's just what comes out when we all get together and put it together. For this last EP (*Old Pain*) that we did, we didn't sit down and plan it out. We put our pieces into it and they became what they did organically.
Ricky: Until we started working with Tyson. (Chicken of Dead To Me) Tyson came in and screwed everything up. [laughter] On this last EP that we did Tyson helped us out on it, he produced it. None of us had ever worked with a producer before. He was really cool,

got really involved even when we were writing the songs. We would send demos of what we were doing and he would send us a lot of feedback. It was like having another member in the band.

Dylan: The way I felt he worked with us is that he would push us to do stuff. We would be like, "Oh that's fine. That song is done. Lock it up," and he would be like, "Well why don't you try this chord that you normally wouldn't play," just little stuff like that. And he would pull us out of our comfort zone a little bit. "Make this weird-ass chord" [laughs].

Ricky: Made a big difference.

Dylan: Exactly. 'Cause when you write a song you replay it so many times before you even get halfway done with it. It's like it's almost just one big gray wash of shit. You'll sit there and it will be like, "Dude you need to write another part for this," and it's like, "Uh, I don't know. I literally have nothing for you." He was able to come in and get you out of that locked mental state.

Todd: Will, you don't like the studio?

Will: I don't mind it but I do get nervous.

Ricky: Shaking.

Dylan: Shaking like a leaf.

Madeline: More so than on stage?

Will: Stage is nothing. Fest was our 110th show.

Ricky: When we're in the practice space recording our demos and Will has to record his part, he is nervous as hell. Can't even hang.

Will: Weird, yeah. But as soon as I start the process, I just forget about it. It's just up to that ledge.

Todd: What do you think that is, though?

Will: I have no clue. Maybe disappointment, letting these dudes down….

Adam: That's what it should be. [laughter]

Will: I think it might be money, 'cause most of the time we're like on a schedule. We need to finish on time. If I fuck this up, I gotta do another take. The new EP, though.... That was a whole different process, everything

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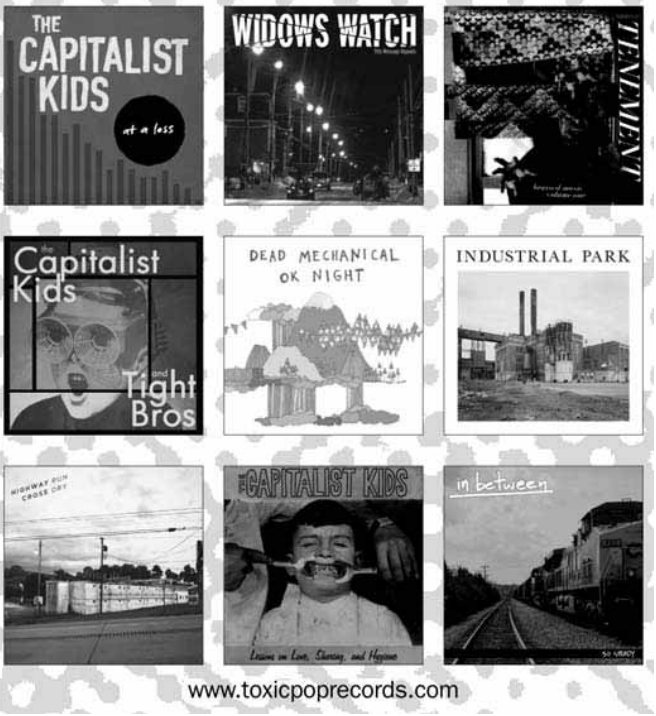

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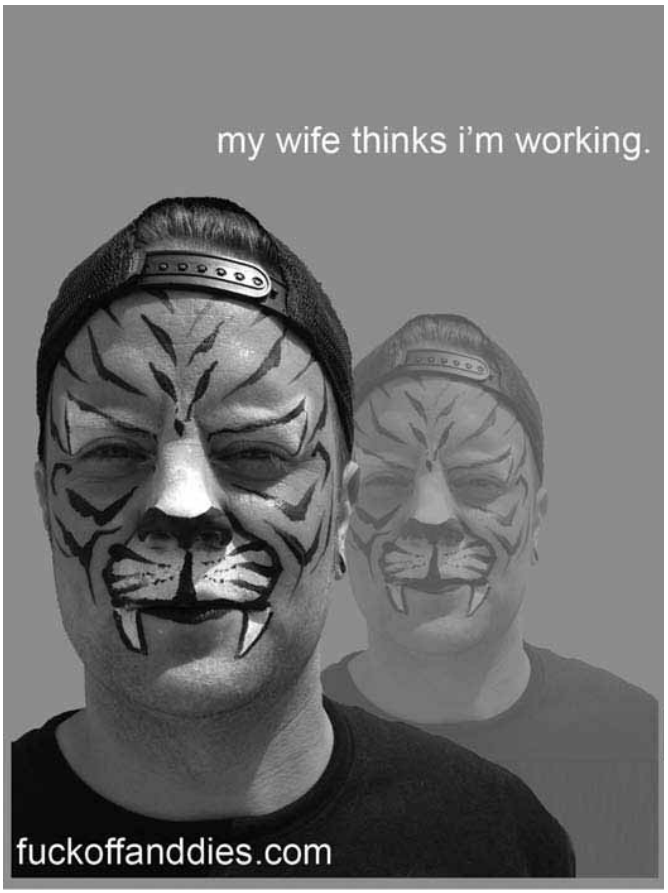

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was bigger. The studio we were in was this crazy L.A. studio. "Whoa." It was way overwhelming. And then working with Chicken and working with our engineer—we knew we were probably going into something huge.
Ricky: Who was that country guy who recorded there?
Dylan: Staind. [laughter]
Todd: Has a fan ever come up to you and ever addressed a band member incorrectly?
Dylan: Uh, we don't have fans. [laughter]
Adam: We got one of those blowing on me when I'm playing the drums, that's all I know.
Ricky: I think you're confused, man. Got us mixed up with somebody else.
Dylan: We've been compared to Dropkick Murphys and stuff before. Like, "All right. Thanks." [laughter]
Madeline: [To Adam] People just come up and talk to you about your guitar playing.
Adam: "I love your burrito page!" "Oh cool, thanks."
Ricky: "You're doing a really good job with La Escalera Records."
Dylan: "Can you screen print our band shirts for me?"
Adam: "Hey man I ordered our shirts like three weeks ago, where are they at?" "I don't know. Omaha?"
Todd: So I have one more thing. I want you to look at the guy on your left and say why you are really happy he is in the band.
Adam: I'll start, because I'm leading this conversation. [laughter]
Dylan: Nice, nice. Power forward. Give it to me, baby.
Adam: I am really happy that Dylan is in this band because he's a young'un. He brings something new, he's beautiful, he's got a... beard, that's amazing. He's got these plugs. I don't know why he decided to get those because that's a huge life-changing thing. [laughter] I can fit my fist through his ears, that's so stupid. [Dylan laughing] and I get to make fun of him for it, which is good. I mean, you want me to talk about his guitar playing? I won't do that. I'm just going to talk about his physical appearance.
Dylan: Perfect. I am really glad that Ricky is in the band because he is a super good friend, a phenomenal lover, I cherish his friendship, his heart speaks to me, and at the end of the day we can just cuddle up on the couch and read a good book. And he's a good lyricist.
Ricky: I love you, too man. I'm going to confess my love to Will right now.
Will: I'm all ears, brother. [laughter]
Ricky: Man, if I had known we were doing this question I would've sat over there. [laughter] Nah, Will I am very glad you're in this band. You're one of my best friends. We've been through a lot of stuff together.
Adam: Why am I not recording this?
Ricky: You've helped me personally through a lot of stuff. I like hanging out with you. We make good times together. Will, will you marry me?

WE AREN'T REALLY NECESSARILY DOING ANYTHING NEW BUT WHAT WE DO COMES FROM OUR HEARTS AND THAT'S PRETTY MUCH ALL THAT MATTERS.

Will: No, no, no. I'm actually going to....
Adam: Oh snap, it's my turn!
Will: Yeah, I'm actually going to go propose to Adam right now.
Adam: I totally forgot he has to do me. This is so good!
Will: Oh I'll do you.
Dylan: It's like a roast.
Adam: Do you want me to sit a certain way? I could turn towards you, cross my legs....
Will: Yeah actually, can you please turn around and bend over? [laughter]
Adam: I am going to look deep into your eyes.
Will: Adam is pretty simple...
Dylan: That's it, that's it, *end*.
Will: I love Adam because he is older than me. Not really, but he's old like me and uh, we listen to hair metal together.
Adam: I want you to look into my eyes, Will! [laughter]
Will: And he is a great drummer and he will drink anytime I say, "Hey let's go drink."

NICOLE GOODWIN

RIVAL MOB

TODD POLLOCK, both

Thuggy hardcore made by older guys; that's Rival Mob in a nutshell.

I cut my teeth on punk in the late '80s, early '90s. It was a scarier time at shows and I don't miss the violence. I think it's stupid to romanticize people getting stabbed, rat-packed, curbed, and crippled to prove that punk was dangerous or a threat. Yet I still sometimes crave nastiness in the music itself—unapologetic, raw-meat, acid-in-the-wound, life-is-fucked, punch-a-koala, it-won't-get-better hardcore punk. Much like with Out Cold, I'm cool with hate as long as it's spread across everything equally. I'm cool with not thinking sometimes, with using my Neanderthal brain to channel the basic need to smash shit to itty-bitty bits—as long as no one besides me gets hurt in the process.

Madeline and I met up with Doug and Justin of Rival Mob at Doug's "bubble" tea shop in Boston. I was concerned that we'd encounter the Rival Mob party line to maintain mystery, or a hardcore image. My fear proved to be unfounded. They were candid and forthright, not only about themselves, but the band and contemporary hardcore. Doug wishes he could eat an apple without his jaw popping out. Justin equates hardcore fests with cosplay that aren't as cool as Star Trek conventions. What follows is an honest conversation told by people who've been in the trenches for decades.

And Rival Mob's music slays.

Special thanks goes out to fellow YOFC'er Tim Brooks, who first introduced me to Rival Mob's music, then set the stage for this interview.

Interview by Todd Taylor and Madeline Bridenbaugh | Intro by Todd | Photos credited | Layout by Daryl
Present at interview Doug—Guitar, Justin—Drums, Not present, Brendan—Vocals, Pearse—Bass, Trevor—Guitar

Madeline: What is your mission statement as a band?
Doug: None. [Laughter] We have no goal, we have no plan…
Justin: We have no message.
Doug: We just exist. We just do what we do, but we have no mission statement—nothing we ever worked for or towards, just what happens, happens kind of thing.
Todd: I have had a hard time explaining to people what your band is.
Justin: It's hard for us to understand why people like us, so…. [laughter]
Todd: I just go, "It's kind of like, thuggy hardcore, but it's awesome and it's really, really good, made by older guys."
Justin: That's kind of the gimmick, I think.
Todd: The older guy part?
Justin: Yeah, yeah. But older guys playing hardcore that's not as embarrassing as other old guys playing hardcore. [laughter]
Doug: Well, I think Rival Mob has existed as a band for nine, ten years at this point. [laughs] Something like that. That was before me and him were in the band, but everyone in the band is, uh… who's the youngest? Trevor and Brendan, they'd be thirty-two?
Justin: Thirty-two, thirty-three.
Doug: I am thirty-six and he [Justin] is thirty-five. So there is the dividing line where you're either much older than us and you're in a band that existed in the '80s, or you're much younger than us and you're just kind of in the scene for a couple years. In that regard, I don't know how to call us old or young 'cause I feel like the rules have changed a lot for how old you are and can be in hardcore. Whereas maybe ten years ago, by now we would be dinosaurs. Like, "Why would we even still be involved in this?" There'd be two people who were over thirty, you know?
Todd: Do you think that's a product of Boston?
Doug: I am not originally from Boston so I feel like I can say this from an outsider perspective, but I feel this particular group of bands in Boston—and I guess myself included because I lived here at various points—were in bands when they were younger. Like pre-2007 or pre-2006. And as those bands all started breaking up and people inevitably started dropping out of the scene, there were not many people left. You went from a scene of let's just say one hundred people and I feel like it went down to twenty people overnight. People just dropped out, moved on, decided to do something else.
Justin: And there's a lot of turnover in Boston 'cause it's a college town.
Doug: Yeah, there's this cluster of bands that we were all involved in; we're the guys who were leftover, didn't leave, and didn't move on.
Todd: Yeah, In Los Angeles it's less disgraceful to be older and into punk or hardcore because you do have enough people around you where you're not just a creep or a dinosaur, you're active participants.
Doug: I would say when I first became more aware of the Boston scene there was two, maybe three guys who were considered older, and they were definitely freaks. "Why are these guys still here?" "What's going on?" But now I am older than the age of those guys then, and most of our friends are, too. I don't know when that shift happened or if that's a Boston thing.

I actually don't think it's a Boston thing because the generations before us also jumped ship at early ages. But I like to think of it sometimes like each generation that goes on sees what the generation before did, and the generation before that, and the generation before that. I feel like our generation was in a very kind of particular time where we were able to watch a lot of things we would consider mistakes that people were making—like things that we thought were kind of corny or not what we would aspire to do. We learned from those—and I don't think it was intentional by any means—but people stuck around longer than previous generations.
Todd: Yeah, it is weird now that longevity is possible in punk rock, sustainability.
Doug: In some ways that has become a bad thing. Where you have turned these people—who have kind of left and came back or didn't leave—into legendary figures. My idea of hardcore includes everyone being on a level playing field, nobody being better than anybody else, equal footing. But I feel like the thing where punk and hardcore can have these legendary acts headlining festivals and stuff, it just turns them into a weird god-like status and then makes the whole scene in general just more bland. It takes away the thing that made it more special. I have nothing against the older bands; obviously I love the music and like to see the band sometimes. I just feel there's a weird shift happening… I don't want to see a documentary about hardcore bands. I don't want to read twelve books a month about hardcore bands. That takes away the specialness of it—the element where you kind of had to dig a little bit. That's just me personally, though.
Madeline: Is that why you guys said you wouldn't want to play someone's reunion tour or someone's high school reunion?
Doug: Did we say that?
Madeline: Somebody said that.
Doug: That sounds like… I don't know who said that actually.
Justin: I said that, actually. [laughter] And I stand by it. I personally don't want to be a part of these people's mid-life crisis, even though they are all bands I really liked or still like. I would rather they come back so they could pay their rent. That would feel better to me than some weird—they used to be the man now they realize they are just ordinary people—so they come back to hardcore to get the glory. I don't like that, you know what I mean?
Doug: And you can tell which guys are kind of doing it for what. Am I going to criticize somebody because somebody offered them $30,000 to play a show and they said yes?

I don't want to see a documentary about hardcore bands. I don't want to read twelve books a month about hardcore bands.

Justin: No, I like that. I think that's way cooler.
Doug: It's at least the honest way to go about it. And the guys who have been away for like twenty years but suddenly they're back a hundred percent, you can tell they just want to tell you stories.
Justin: That's what kind of creeps me out. I don't like it. It's weird, 'cause with the internet now you can keep tabs on everyone. Before, growing up, the guitar player of any classic band—who the fuck knows where that guy went, you know what I mean? Now you can see how boring and normal their lives are on the internet every day.
Madeline: Oh yeah, he's working construction somewhere.
Justin: So it doesn't matter, yeah.
Todd: Justin, you once said, "Doug and Trevor supplied some hateful pieces of fuck, which have turned out to be some of my favorite tracks on that album (*Mob Justice*)." Hateful in what way?
Justin: Like the riffs felt really mean-spirited I thought, which I like. I think that's an important part of the Rival Mob's charm. Same with the lyrics, too, but definitely "Friendly Freaks" in particular, that one I thought was a really mean song not just lyrically but musically. And then Trevor did "Fake Big," another one that I like in particular.
Madeline: What is the writing process like in the Rival Mob?
Doug: [laughs] I'll preface it by saying this—me and Justin live about a mile away from each other. Pearce lives a little further, he is still in the city….
Justin: He lives in Dorchester.
Doug: And Trevor lives an hour away South. Trevor came in the band around 2012. Before that everyone pretty much lived in the same area, so if we wanted to practice, if we wanted to try to do something, it would not be that complicated. Now Trevor has to drive up to us or we have to drive down to him. And everyone in the band works nine-to-five type stuff so you have to wait until after work. So, driving an hour-plus both ways to get to practice, it's not the worst I've ever had to do but it doesn't make it easy.

Brendan has lived as close as a mile from me, but up until about three months ago he lived about three hours away. Particularly in the last year and a half, just the nature of where he was living made it next to impossible to get him to practice. He was living on Nantucket Island, which is off Cape Cod, working for a newspaper there. He would have to drive from his house to the dock, catch a boat, then that's still over an hour away from Boston. And depending on how the weather is, that boat is either coming or not coming. There's a slow boat, a fast boat… very complicated. So with that, the writing process really slowed down. But generally speaking, pretty much everyone brings something to the table.
Justin: I don't bring anything to the table as far as songwriting goes.
Doug: I don't believe that.

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Justin: No that's the truth, that's the truth. [laughter] I don't write any of the riffs or anything.

Doug: I feel like the drums shape the music more than you give it credit for though. 'Cause I can write a song and depending on what the drums are it could be ten different songs, just the tempo. I feel like everyone brings something to the table. I would say one of the reasons it slowed down so much is Brendan was probably the one who brought the most in terms of songs.

Justin: Yeah, he's the main songwriter.

Doug: He's the main songwriter and stuff would get edited down at the practice space. So when you can get all those things together in one room, we actually get things together pretty quick. I think we are very, very conscious about what will end up being a song. A lot gets left on the cutting room floor. And—this is a pretty common thing—someone will ask us if we want to do a record and we'll be like, "Yes, but just so you know it's going to be two years until you hear from us again." And that's just straight-up how it works because everyone in the band has a lot of other stuff going on. We're not necessarily practicing every week—we're not even practicing every month. So it takes a long time for these things to come together, then when you add the editing process into that, it can take even longer.

Todd: I think you've used the term "glacial," for the speed.

Doug: That is actually pretty good. I don't know who said that but that is actually a really good description.

Madeline: Since you don't practice often, do you guys hang out?

Doug: Yeah, me and Justin are personality-wise very close. We're very solitary people. We hung out this weekend. I think out of anyone in the band, me and Justin hang out and then maybe Trevor and Brendon just because of their proximity. Not to say that Pearce doesn't hang out, but…

Justin: Pearce doesn't want to hang out with us, and I don't blame him, personally. [laughter]

Doug: Pearce is busy with his duties as the "Mayor of Boston." He doesn't have time for us. [laughter] I will say that when you get the five of us in a van together heading to a show, that is one of the most perfect groups of people coming together and having a good time hanging out. I couldn't ask for anything more. And when Brendan lived here, I used to hang out with him like every day.

Todd: Do you guys make a distinction between punk and hardcore?

Doug: In 2016 I think you have to make that distinction. When I was fifteen, sixteen, something like that, I would tell you, "It's hardcore punk." But I am talking like 1994, 1995, 1996—it was still close enough to the original source material and the original scene that hardcore was a thing to describe the kind of punk it was. But let's just say hardcore, punk in the U.S. really started in 1979 or something, so it's now been over… What is that? [laughter]

Justin: Thirty-six years. Well I was born in '80 and I am thirty-five.

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I wish I hadn't as recklessly stage dived throughout my teens and twenties.

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I probably would be able to walk comfortably now, be able to eat an apple without my jaw popping out.

Doug: Okay yeah, so it's been thirty-something years since that time. In the original cluster of bands you could tell there were differences, everyone kind of had a little bit different thing they were throwing in, but in thirty-five years you've had time for each of those little things to veer off even more. In some way those roads are running next to each other, but in a lot of ways those roads went in different directions—ideologically, musically, lyrically, everything.

With the internet, you can get everything from one specific vein of that road that took off. Ideally, I would love if it was just one big thing but I just don't think that's reality anymore. Too many things have happened to fragment it and the scene in general. The overall landscape of punk is just so big now. There are people who probably have their conception of punk and don't even know where this thing started or where it came from. What's the origin of why there's that mosh part or anything like that, or this idea of unity lyrics, why is that even relevant.

Particularly in this city, I think people want it to be combined but it's just so divided ideologically. It seems like the division is even more about how you dress than it is the musical differences. Because I think musically, especially now, people want to be into varied things that they would call hardcore punk, but I think the main divider now is: are you wearing black or not. I'd say like ninety-five percent, it's no connection. Five percent it's still a thing, but I think it's a minority in the scene that still would think that.

Todd: Do you agree Justin?

Justin: I think a lot of modern hardcore has nothing to do with punk. I only like hardcore that is derived from stuff that sounds like the '80s. I guess if that makes me a hipster then I guess I am a hipster. I don't like the modern sound. I like stuff that ideologically, musically is derived from the '80s. And I do think divisions always kind of existed in hardcore, and that makes sense because that's the hardcore way to push people away. The way things are happening now totally make sense to me. The more walls you can put up the better I think for people in hardcore. That's how it goes I think, and it's always been that way in hardcore.

Madeline: People love walls.

Justin: Yeah, whatever can make you feel superior to other people. That's kind of the hardcore way and it's always been that way, even if people say that it's not, look at their actions. But I think you're right, it comes down to what clothes you wear. Image is everything in punk and hardcore and at the end of the day. That's why at Chaos in Tejas you'll see a band that kicks ass and rips and people are like, "Yeah, it's cool." Then another band that was in their costume, everyone is like "Yeeeeah!" Know what I mean?

Doug: In terms of the band though, whether or not we're a punk or hardcore band, I would say that we are a hardcore band. But at the same time, because of who we are in the band, the way we think, and the way we look at the scene at large, I don't think we are pigeonholed into that. I don't think that's necessarily what we present ourselves as, but at the end of the day if you asked anyone in the band, "What kind of band is this?" I think we would have to say hardcore.

Justin: Actually, the one thing I am proud about with the Rival Mob—because I do give the Rival Mob a lot of shit even though I am in the band [laughter]—the one thing I am proud of is we are a unity band, right?

Doug: Yeah, definitely.

Justin: The people in different cliques and different subgenres of hardcore, we get over with most of them at least. It's not just straightedge guys who wear our shirts. It's not just raw punkers or modern hardcore guys or thugs. I think people from all those demographics like the Rival Mob, and that's what I am most proud of.

Todd: So collectively, as a band, you have members in around thirty different bands across different spectrums of punk, like Battle Ruins is more oi, Mind Erasers is just a completely different thing… do you think you save specific songs for the Rival Mob or that the Rival Mob just has a really clear vision?

Doug: Well, so we're all in genre spin-off bands, but I think all the bands we do fall under the same general umbrella.... what brought us to the table was probably hardcore. But again there are so many different splinters of hardcore and one road leads to grindcore, one road leads to Revolution Summer or whatever you want to call it.

Since we all came from hardcore and branched out from there—we were all interested in other little parts of it—and maybe if you're a random person and you hear all our bands you'd be like, "Oh it's all the same thing," but if you understood the music you'd be, "Okay this one is kind of this vein, this one is kind of this vein, this one is kind of over here." So I would say we all like the same cluster of stuff.

When I am going to write music for Give or when I am going to write music for Rival Mob—I'm writing music it is in my head from the beginning that this is for this band or this is for that band. Otherwise it just gets too confusing. Maybe every now and then I will write something and be like, "This doesn't work for anything." I am not trying to bring a Rival Mob fast part into Give—not that it wouldn't necessarily work—but at the same time I am not going to try to bring something I wrote for Give over to Rival Mob. Each thing is good for what it is.

Madeline: So does having more aggressive bands like this, or being in a band in general is it limited by or limiting to your personal lives?

Doug: Well, Trevor is married but none of us have kids. But his wife also comes from hardcore punk. And Brendan and me, both our girlfriends came from punk and hardcore. The only thing that is limiting is that we all play in twenty bands and we are never home.

Justin: But even that is not very limiting because Rival Mob never had any intention of going out on the circuit and doing big tours. We do it when we want to do it so it's never really been a problem.

Todd: You guys are of a specific generation of punk and hardcore. What is something that you at thirty know that you didn't know at twenty?

Justin: About hardcore?

Todd: Or about yourself. Something that you have found valuable now.

Doug: The only thing I can think of is I wish I hadn't as recklessly stage dived throughout my teens and twenties. I probably would be able to walk comfortably now, be able to eat an apple without my jaw popping out. [laughter]

Justin: Well as far as a lifestyle goes, I have been living the same lifestyle since I was fifteen. I have been frozen in time. Honestly, I basically do the same shit that I did when I was fifteen or sixteen, but what was weird at the time—I was surprised that there was so much turnover. I was hardcore for life.

Doug: Oh, I was exactly the same way.

Justin: It was really shocking when I would hear like, "Oh, that dude became this," or isn't into hardcore or like, "Whoa they aren't straightedge anymore? That's so weird." But I totally understand why those people did what they did, but that just didn't happen for me. Maybe to my detriment [laughs] Maybe I'm trapped.

Madeline: Speaking of stage diving, your crowds get kind of rowdy do you take any kind of personal responsibility for their safety as far as like….

Justin: Nope. [laughter] Boys will be boys.

Doug: I did all the same stuff, you know what I mean? Everyone out there knows what they are getting into and what they're doing.

Justin: I almost feel like if you didn't do stupid shit like that in hardcore maybe like you didn't go full in.

Doug: Yeah, did you ever come home with a boot print on your face and your mom is just like, "What is that?" [laughter] I'm not going to say that I don't look out sometimes and like, "Oh, I hope that kid's okay," or "That looks like, not good," but I'm not feeling that it's on me if he's not okay. But sometimes I see a kid do the most beautiful, perfect stage dive and I'm like, "Wow. That kid. He's got it."

Todd: On the other side of that, have you ever wanted to give them fitness regimens, because some of those kids windmill for half a song and then sit out.

Justin: But then some are just incredible, I know they watch YouTube all day and they can really refine their moshing styles and their stage diving styles, 'cause the quality overall has gone up big time since when I first started going to shows. Or I see a guy who is doing the exact same move as a guy in a particular video from the '80s.

Doug: That is part of what the internet gave people.

Justin: Hardcore is like cosplay now. [laughter]

We have a Facebook page, but we have no idea who is in charge of it. We've actually asked the person to just stop.

Doug: Yeah, it's straight up cosplay. 'Cause you can go on YouTube and you can read on some message board, "Oh, this guy was the best mosher." Then you go on YouTube and watch twenty videos of him moshing, and then practice, then you come to the show and you do it.

Justin: It's cool. It's kind of sick, though. I get why it sucks but it's also awesome.

Madeline: So have cops ever actually broken up one of your shows?

Doug: Not for Rival Mob. That's not that common of a thing around here anymore. If you're going to play a basement show that's at a show in a neighborhood, you have to expect that's going to happen.

Justin: I feel like when shows get broken up, it's not because people are going crazy moshing, it's a noise complaint or someone is being an idiot outside, someone lit something on fire, someone did graffiti.

Doug: If I had to count all the shows I have ever been to in my life, playing or just going, I'd say less than one percent involve the police. I don't feel like it is that common a thing for us. It isn't like '82 L.A. or something.

Justin: Yeah, being punk is not dangerous. It is just like any other subculture. It's not that big of a deal.

Doug: They come and see someone and they're like, "Oh this is a Blink-182 concert," you know what I mean?

Todd: Yeah, the cops maybe even have a Black Flag tattoo.

Doug: Exactly. I have probably had more instances where cops actually ask me questions about, "What band is playing? Oh, is that like Minor Threat?" [laughter]

Madeline: Let's talk about your band as a commodity. You guys sell a huge amount of merch and T-shirts at your shows and we can't help thinking of them as products like Honus Wagner baseball cards or trendy toys or something.

Justin: Yeah, they are the same.

Doug: We think of them the same way. At this point, "stuff" in hardcore is all just collectible memorabilia.

Justin: Like concert memorabilia.

Doug: I know no one is listening to the cassettes that we sell. No one is listening to the LPs. They're going to download it anyway. It's just a collectible. The reason the vinyl industry is so big right now is they've figured out a way to combat people just downloading mp3s for free. They introduce this collectible you can buy of the band instead. So everyone is buying these collectibles now. And not to say I never collected records or shirts or anything like that, but….

Justin: But niche white people like crap. [laughter] Even if they don't want it, they're going to buy it.

Doug: As a band, the Rival Mob has never had a guarantee. We've never asked for any amount of money for a show ever. We just take what is presented to us. Who knows what we are going to get for selling merch. I have no idea going in. Someone needs to pay for gas. Someone needs to pay for the van we rented. We all played in bands for years where you would just pay for it yourself and hope for the best but in terms of our merch. That's something that has always been a weird thing for me.

Early on we got a lot of flack for people being like, "Oh they just sell all this merch and create all this hype." But we weren't the ones selling the stuff for ten times the price on eBay. That has nothing to do with us. To be honest, we have that song "Fake Big." That's the way we have always thought

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of our band. We are fake big. There's this perception that we're this big band but I don't feel that at all. If you saw the reality of when people bring us in to play a show—and it's not like a huge fest or something—it's not what people think.

Justin: Especially Boston.

Doug: So if we roll to a show, let's say I print fifty shirts, it's because I think we might sell—at most—fifty shirts. This money is coming out of my pocket. I'm fronting the money for these shirts, so why would I want to front a thousand dollars for hundreds of shirts that are just going to sit in my basement and then I don't have that money? We never play that much so why am I going to invest that much? And the other thing is, I say it like this, in terms of shirt designs—we've had a lot of shits, and a couple hits. You know what I mean? [laughter]

Justin: Mostly shits.

Doug: Yeah, and early on when the stuff started happening, in a non-malicious way, there was a period of time where me and Brendan would get together and be like, "Okay, let's see if they'll buy this piece of crap." Y'know what I mean? [laughs] And that hasn't happened for a long time, but just being like, "Will they buy *this*? Let's see…."

Todd: Well, the first shirt was for a benefit.

Justin: That's true.

Doug: Before I joined the band there was actually a no-shirt-ever policy.

Madeline: Is that because of a Fugazi thing?

Doug: I don't think so. I think it started as a funny inside joke. But we played one of the Sound and Fury fests in California. A really good friend during our set had got in a fight and a kid slashed his face with a knife. The next show we played was in that guy's hometown and I was like, "I don't know what his deal is"—he was a young kid at the time. I didn't know if he has health insurance. So me and Brendan sat on the couch in my house and we made a shirt. Every penny of that shirt went directly to him, I handed him everything. And that was where the first shirt came from. But then, after that the floodgates were opened, the joke was over. Alright, "Maybe we'll make another shirt."

But yeah, I feel like in-general hardcore shows are conventions. They aren't even shows anymore, just straight-up conventions. People can come and do their meet-and-greet…

Todd: Like Star Trek conventions.

Justin: But not as cool as that.

Doug: Not nearly as cool. I'd much rather see Avery Brooks talk than watch Judge or something like that. But yeah, it's just something where people from the internet can meet up in person and you can buy all these gimmicks from different people. That's what a fest is, and the merch is just an extension of that, just some collectible people can have.

Justin: Get a piece of the action.

Todd: Madeline and I were talking about this the other day. Your record is worth more if you never play it.

Madeline: Does that superficiality bother you guys at all?

Justin: No, that's what hardcore was built on.

Doug: Personally, it does bother me, but at this point it's too many years of this culture in hardcore building up. What can you do about it at this point? Someone is going to spend eight hundred dollars for a shirt. It's going to happen.

Justin: I get it, though. I think people feel like hardcore is a real time-and-place, moment-type thing and they can own a piece of the moment if they buy a shirt. I get it, I feel the same.

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Todd: Name one good thing about modern music.
Doug: Like in general, modern music?
Todd: We can go any path. Like the production of music? Like the internet sucks sometimes but as a band you can record certain things, you can scratch tracks together and bridge that gap. I was talking to Mikey Young of Eddy Current and Total Control and he loves it because he is in rural Australia and he can master people's stuff from around the world. There are some benefits.
Doug: Oh, absolutely. The first thing that comes to my mind, is say there is a band that you liked and you've heard everything there is to hear by them—you've heard every record, every release, every live thing you can find, and then you're like, "I guess that's it, because this band doesn't exist anymore. That's all I'll ever get from this band I love," and then suddenly it's like, "We found this under the sink at the singer's house." Then there's a way for you to get that very easily.

One of the great things about modern music is the accessibility, of course, but at the same time I think how that reflects on hardcore is not as good of a thing. I'm not saying that no one has the right or is entitled to listen to these records—it used to be you really had to work to try to listen to it. Fine, but maybe when you take that away it takes away some of the specialness of that band.
Todd: Specialness of the hunt. You can't listen to it for three years, and then you find it.
Doug: Exactly! Does anybody have that experience and they catch the last twenty seconds of a song on the radio and they don't say what the song was, and it drives you crazy for like ten years?
Madeline: Happens all the time. [laughs]
Doug: Yeah but now, if that happens, I just pull out my phone and there's an app.
Madeline: You have an app. You don't even need to type anything in.
Doug: I sometimes think—I'll just use an example—Straight Ahead. This is one I think about a lot. When I was a kid all I heard was "Straight Ahead is the greatest hardcore band of all time," but I couldn't find that record for ten years. I didn't get to hear it from age fifteen until I finally got it as a bootleg when I was twenty-four or something. That is not going to happen anymore. Maybe that is a weird thing because I said that thing about bands being legendary, but when you take away the underground aspect away from things like hardcore and punk, what differentiates it from college rock or alternative, or anything else? What makes it special?
Todd: I feel that way about Zero Boys. Love that band.
Doug: Funny thing. I was looking for it at my house I couldn't find it… There is an issue of *Razorcake* with Against Me! on the cover and there is an article on the Zero Boys on the inside but there is a picture of me stage diving, wearing a "Stop and Think" shirt, to the Zero Boys. I was looking for it all morning and could not find it. [laughter]
Todd: So Justin, is there a certain amount of freedom in not regarding the expectations of anybody else?
Justin: Yeah… well, I think I am a perfectionist and OCD. I hold a high standard for myself as far as what I want to do and the music I want to make. I definitely think there is freedom in not having the expectations of anybody else. That's a fact. That's a hard thing to do, especially for musicians, 'cause a lot of musicians are insecure. If you can somehow finesse that, that's awesome, but I haven't met anyone that can really do that. [laughter] I am sure it's great though.
Madeline: [to Doug] So, I don't know how you came into owning this tea shop, but are you the one that came up with the name Boston Tea Stop?
Doug: No, no, no. That is the previous owner before me. It's just a great pun altogether, but straight up I've had people walk upstairs into the store and look around so confused. Like, "Are you okay? Can I help you with something?" And they're like, "Someone told me this is where I get the T." Like, the train. "Oh, the Boston T stop, it's right over there." [laughter] But I can't take credit for that.
Todd: I also like that you are straightedge and serving tea. [laughter]
Madeline: In Boston, too. Why does everybody here call Boba tea, bubble tea?
Justin: Why—is that not like, a normal thing?
Todd: No, no.
Madeline: Noooo…
Doug: East Coast bubble tea—this is going to sound really ridiculous—East Coast bubble tea *culture* is really different than the West Coast.
Justin: People are actually more condescending about bubble tea on the West Coast than punk and hardcore.
Doug: We don't have all-year-round nice weather here so I don't feel like it ever really dug in. It was more of like a food trend. It isn't engrained in popular culture, not what people would think to get every single day. It is a different beast. East Coast/West Coast bubble tea culture is… different.
Madeline: The new East Coast/West Coast battle. [laughter]
Todd: Is it true you could buy an exclusive vinyl record only here when it was released?
Doug: So when we put out *Mob Justice*, the Rev LP, I had this shop and then the drummer of Give co-owns a record store out in D.C. I thought in my head, "Oh, we should give Joint Custody their own pressing." But then, and I am not trying to say this in a bad way, but Rev was not really down with that. [laughter] They wanted a little piece of that too, so they were like, "We'll give them fifty but we want one hundred and fifty." So I'm like, "Okay, if you're going to do it like then give me fifty and I will sell them out of the store." And then they're like, "How about we make four hundred then and we get two-fifty and you guys each get this." And I'm like, whatever, the fun's over on that one.

We made up these silly T-shirts to go with it that said, "Available at Joint Custody and The Boston Tea Stop." But the thing is, I personally don't have any social media or anything like that, so I had no way to put the information out that they were going to be here. Maybe like five people showed up. [laughs]
Todd: Our buddy Kyle came.
Doug: For real? [laughs]
Justin: I definitely remember people asking about it.
Madeline: So the lack of your band on social media, is that out disinterest or a deliberate choice?
Doug: It is definitely deliberate. I would say it is deliberate in the sense of a definite lack of interest and general disgust at the way a lot of people promote their bands. I call it press release culture, in hardcore. Why do you have to put out a press release like, "Hey guys, we might be going to the studio next week…" Or, "Everyone in the band went to eat sandwiches today!"
Todd: "Got a rad haircut."
Doug: Yeah, exactly. Is that really something that needs to be put out there for a hardcore band? I don't know. For me, no. I don't need to know those things. For a lot of the ways I've tried to do the band—I try to think if I was a kid, what would I think if I saw the band doing this? In that regard, it's on purpose. We have a Facebook page, but we have no idea who is in charge of it.
Todd: Your Facebook page is weird.
Doug: We've actually asked the person to just stop. Like, "Can you not post weird right wing political mumbo jumbo?"
Madeline: It's weird stuff, just really random.
Doug: Yeah, we have no clue who it is. We gave up.
Justin: That's legit awesome. I think it's cool we don't know who it is. And they won't stop doing it. [laughter]
Doug: I think Brendan has been like, "Listen. At one point you must have liked us as a band, why are you doing this?" And they're like, "Ah, nah it's cool. I'm just going to keep doing it."
Justin: Didn't we think for a while it was Evan? We thought it was Brendan's brother.
Doug: Yeah, but we don't know. I've had people be like, "Oh, we've been sending show offers to you." And obviously we are never getting them, not that it matters, but what is this guy doing with them? [laughter] Is he responding?
Todd: Just, "Vote for Trump."
Doug: Exactly! People leave us messages and stuff but we never get them. That's that guy's thing.
Todd: Adds to the mystique.
Justin: That's what the people want though, they want the mystique. [laughter]
Doug: We did have a great Myspace page.
Madeline: We can end on the Myspace page.
Doug: It's uh myspace dot com, slash the Rival Mob, six seven nineteen. [laughter]

DOWNTOWN BOYS

INTERVIEW BY MADELINE BRIDENBAUGH AND TODD TAYLOR
INTRODUCTION BY TODD TAYLOR
PHOTOS BY MEZTLI HERNANDEZ
LAYOUT BY LAUREN MEASURE

On first listen, Providence, R.I. punk band Downtown Boys reminded me of a contemporary interpretation of X-Ray Spex: powerful energy radiating from a brilliantine core. There's politics punctuated by horn-infused music that is contagiously danceable. *Full Communism* is a fantastic album.

I didn't know any of the band members before this interview, so as is my practice, I made a zine of all the research I did on the band—printouts of previous interviews and lyrics. I watched their videos. This is what I call the "text" (versus the sound) of a band. What they've said, what they've been asked. I highlighted quotes, like Victoria saying, "My concha no es bastante blanca para ti," during a performance at a Jewish museum. I noted how often Selena and Rage Against The Machine were referred to in interviews but few contemporary punk bands or other political chicana icons. I found out Victoria and Joey have long histories in activism, as they talked clearly about politics, labor, sexism, racism, capitalism's ongoing legacy of slavery, and neocolonialism.

So it was armed with all of that background, that I met Joey, who picked us up at the train station and invited me up to their warehouse space in an industrial part of town.

The following interview didn't go fully as I'd hoped or planned—as you'll soon see. It was contentious at times on both sides, but provides food for thought. I disagree with Victoria's assessment that Razorcake is part of the "non-profit industrial complex," but I think it's important people who have agreed to put aside time to talk to us have the right to say what they want. We owe bands an honest representation of their ideas, whether we agree with them or not; that's why we have question-and-answer format interviews.

After its conclusion, Adrienne and Mary took us to absolutely dynamite Chinese food, and we talked for well over another hour before they dropped us off at our hotel.

Victoria: Vocalist
Mary: Bass
Joey: Guitar
Adrienne: Saxophone
Not present
Norlan: Drums

Todd: Could any of you explain "anti-nostalgia" in terms of the Downtown Boys?
Joey: In our context—in Providence, when you're first making music here I think there's some amount of pushback because there's a deeply embedded culture and scene here, a lot of which is really awesome. Lightning Bolt and these kinds of bands who are playing in buildings very much like this one (a rundown, converted work-live space in the warehouse district)—if not this exact building—and certain expectations of what shows are supposed to look like, who was supposed to be at the shows, what the sound was supposed to be like, et cetera.

When we were producing things and putting on shows that didn't look like that, a lot of people question your authenticity because they want to see a reproduction of something they already know or what they think punk is or what a show is. So, though we are using some sounds that perhaps have roots in older musical styles and things that have come before us, I think we're very much about the future in producing something for a world beyond what we have at the moment.
Madeline: What would you say are your main weapons in music-based activism?
Victoria: Like, activism in the music scene or using music as activism?
Madeline: Either. Both.
Mary: I feel like dancing is an excellent weapon.
Joey: It's not like the only avenue we believe that's necessary to fight in. A lot of us are involved in organizing at different levels and music, the cultural creation, and community-building are aspects of a larger "war," to use that word. It's part of a much larger thing with a lot of internal issues as well.
Madeline: So what kinds of other activities and organizations are you involved in as far as activism?
Victoria: Personally, I don't know if it is so much activities as much as it is responding to the context that I live in. So obviously the police: being really involved in anti-police

brutality, municipal ordinances, or being present and aware and participating in lots of things that hold the police accountable. Like suing the cops or protesting the cops. Talking to people who have been affected by police violence and putting it in a context of violence in general. State violence. Reproductive rights and reproductive freedom.

Joey and I, we met doing labor organizing. Union rights, and also wage theft and tip theft are huge things in Providence. There are a lot of immigrants in Providence. We're a majority Latino city but have always been a really big immigrant city and state. Because of that, you see a lot of systems of violence: socially, racially, and economically. It's a very dilapidated state economically, so I think sometimes it's that whole, "You should be lucky to have a job" mentality.

Prisoner rights stuff. We worked on banning the box (on job applications) in Rhode Island, asking if you've been convicted of a crime.

Right now, housing's a really big one in Rhode Island, because if you're in public housing, if your family member comes into your house and stays there, even just one night, and they have a criminal record, you can be putting your public housing in jeopardy. Joey is in the process of being evicted by a slumlord.

Joey: Yeah. It's all a battle.

Madeline: Are they throwing out everyone from the building or just you?

Joey: Yeah, that's the funny part. It's just us and another couple units. Unclear if even those other units are being completely evicted. It appears as though we're the only ones being totally evicted and others are being given an option to come back.

Madeline: Victoria, you're from California?

Victoria: Yes, I'm from San Jose.

Madeline: Do you identify as a Chicana?

Victoria: I do identify as Chicana, yes.

Madeline: How did that come about—because you mentioned in previous interviews that your family tried to assimilate a lot when you were younger.

Victoria: We did speak Spanish. Sometimes people are like, "Oh, your Spanish isn't that good." None of our Spanish is the best but neither is our English. I definitely learned more Spanish through school. And I don't think people tried to assimilate as much as it was—my family is just American. They were born in the United States, so they're U.S. American.

Madeline: So you gravitate to Selena as a role model. Why did you gravitate towards to her as opposed to someone like Alice Bag?

Victoria: I definitely see Alice Bag as a huge model and influence. I think if I had known about both of them at the same time, I would have been equally gravitational to both of them. But I just knew about Selena more because she was much more of a pop musician, especially where I'm from. She was on key chains, on T-shirts everywhere, at the flea market. Alice Bag's artistic context is different than that.

Todd: So, Victoria, when you lived in San Jose, was there a history of activism that was still active? Were there remnants or echoes of Dolores Huerta (co-founder the National Farm Workers Association) or anything from Cesar Chavez when you were growing up?

Victoria: My family—my mom and her brothers and sisters and my grandparents—were all field farm workers and field workers. My mom worked in the fields up until all the fields got demolished in San Jose. So everyone has memories of that and the first generation, so Cesar Chavez is definitely prominent.

He is also a pop figure that has also been appropriated by whiteness—the complete spectrum of whiteness, from the U.S. government to people just learning about Latino culture and not being from it. He's been appropriated at every point. Lots of things are named after him and people see him as, "Oh Cesar Chavez wouldn't have taken certain acts of social justice that you young punk kids are doing today." He's kind of held as this weird moral relic.

But then on a realistic level, my grandpa and a lot of the men in my family—my great uncles—they were Cesar Chavez water boys during the marches. My grandma and her family definitely were part of that history. My mom's boss when I was growing up, he was a big father figure to me; he married Cesar Chavez's first niece. Everyone knows a Chavez family

A LOT OF PEOPLE QUESTION YOUR AUTHENTICITY BECAUSE THEY WANT TO SEE A REPRODUCTION OF SOMETHING THEY ALREADY KNOW OR WHAT THEY THINK PUNK IS OR WHAT A SHOW IS.

member. It's not even really that political. It's just because everyone's Mexican.

Madeline: [to Mary] You grew up in East L.A.? Did you have a similar experience with activism, culturally?

Todd: The Chicano Moratorium, Ruben Salazar?

Mary: Not really. My mom came to the States from the outskirts of Mexico City when she was a teenager, probably fifteen. 1985. Our experiences are different. We're different sides of Mexicanism.

Madeline: So you met when you were out here (Providence, R.I.), not before?

Mary: Yeah.

Victoria: We met through music.

Todd: So, Victoria, what was the impetus of moving to Providence?

Victoria: I went to college in New York first. Then I had a friend who moved to Providence, so I just came here after I graduated. I've been on the East Coast for ten years.

Mary: I went to college at Cal State Northridge. I lived in the Bay Area a little bit. I lived in Phoenix a little bit. I left Phoenix to come to the East Coast. One of my bands Neonates was touring with Downtown Boys on the East Coast. I worked in New York as a cook for a summer, then we went on tour and I moved to D.C. I lived there for about two years. This summer the Downtown Boys asked me to play bass for them. I did and then I moved up here.

Todd: Going back to activism with music in particular. What does music do for the Downtown Boys that other forms may not do as well or are less satisfying?

Adrienne: When you're playing music or you're performing, there are certain constraints. Time constraints, a certain amount of time you have to talk about certain things, a certain amount of generalizations that you have to make when you are speaking about such complex issues. Playing music brings so many things. We talk about very particular ideas, but there are also many unsaid feelings that playing music and people involved in the process of listening to music—dancing and being with other people who they do and do not know in the same space.

It's hard to have in lots of other spaces. When people are invested and present in the act of consuming music and consuming these feelings; these interactions are taking place. That's a very important, special thing that isn't always vocalized with words. I think that's important—because there are so many people of so many different backgrounds coming to our shows who have had so many different experiences in their life—to have some sort of common ground when we're all experiencing a certain thing. Even if we're experiencing it differently, we're experiencing it together. Music brings people together in that way.

Todd: I think that dovetails back to what Mary was saying—this style of music makes people dance.

Adrienne: There's a connection that happens. That's very, very important.

Victoria: And Mary has said this, too, before: "People playing music as a form of resistance has always existed." So it's not like we're doing anything necessarily special at all and I think that's also really important. Yeah, music, art, and culture have always been a form of resistance. We feel like we must do it and have to do it. And I definitely feel that way with Downtown Boys. Some of the other things I'm involved in, I get to pick and chose what the target looks like or what the campaign looks like. But with this, it's like, "Oh, man," you have to do it.

Joey: This stuff can build community. We've been a band here for four years. This space has existed for three years—we had one of our last shows here last week. There was an amazing crowd of people here. A lot of the performers were young people who built their own following totally independently of anything we're doing. There were so many young people at this show who were excited about doing something here. It's like, okay, we're getting evicted from this place and we have to have an action: on the street picketing this place, making a demand of the landlord. It's going to be those people also out there with us doing that. It's this very direct connection of how building this arts community has a real, direct political potential beyond just its worth as a thing that exists by itself.

Todd: In what ways does the Downtown Boys operate differently internally than a more typical band? Is there profit sharing? Do you have any unwritten codes?

Joey: We definitely do profit sharing. We pay everyone equally, regardless of anything else, which we learned from Bruce Springsteen. He's always famously paid everyone in his band equal to himself off of shows.

Todd: The E Street Band got paid equal to Bruce?

Joey: This is what I've read. Yeah.

Adrienne: That's nice. We can take care of ourselves with the money that we do earn. I think that's pretty cool.

Madeline: Have there been things that you have vetoed, like certain shows or spaces?

Mary: I don't think there's a place that we've banned, has there?

Adrienne: If we have played shows with people that we end up disagreeing with, or do disagree with, we try to have a dialogue and give people opportunity to change or make better decisions. If they're promoters or if they're spaces. Things like that. "This is our worth."

Joey: It's case by case. I'm trying to think if we've refused to play anything.

Victoria: We don't have any all-age venue thing, we'll play any venue. We also will play in the Doritos-sponsored stage at South By Southwest. We're not against that, I don't think, at all.

Madeline: Is that just to spread your message musically?

Victoria: Yeah. Totally. Guerrilla boycott is not going to do anything. It's just not. I don't think we would play a war manufacturer's stage at South By Southwest, but I don't think they have stages there.

Todd: Or the Army recruitment stage.

Victoria: Or the Army recruitment stage—maybe we would play that.

Joey: The mayor thing.

Victoria: That's a good one.

Joey: One time, the now-mayor of Providence—who has proved to be even more awful and neoliberal, worse than even his supporters were expecting—they wanted us to play a show that was a rally for him, essentially. And a lot of musicians in Providence, with the best intentions, got roped into playing that show. Now it's a campaign ad for him on YouTube. He's pursued these awful policies. He's refused to keep his campaign promises. He still wants to give developers these

giant tax breaks that he said he was going to get rid of. He's refusing to sign onto this community safety act piece of legislation that Victoria and a lot of other people have been working on. All of this stuff. I think we had the foresight to know that that was probably going to be the case. And we don't want to play a campaign ad for him. That bothered a lot of people and refusing to play that show continues to have repercussions for us.

Todd: I ask that question because—I don't know if you know, but Razorcake is the only official 501(c)(3) music magazine in America, and that was a very deliberate act. No one can profit specifically. If we actually make appreciable money, it just goes back into the production, not into my back pocket. That's what I was trying to think of—looking at bands and cultural production in different lights; if you have any vision for the future for the band.

Victoria: I think that it's great that Razorcake is so institutional. I think that's awesome. Because if you fell off the face of the earth, it would continue. So that's awesome for sustainability. I also feel the need to push back on that and you are a (c)(3) non-profit, so you could never lobby for a candidate. You can't do explicitly political work. You're also part of the non-profit industrial complex.

That money into the back pocket, I think that's tight. I think that everyone shouldn't get more than living wage. But, for example, we played *The Chris Gethard Show* in New York. They're with Fusion, this big TV company. This big corporation. We also got paid really, really well, right—in order to do that show. Right now, we are using four people's time, a fair amount of it—and we're doing this interview for free. So basically what I'm saying is I totally think it's awesome to think about those models and to be true to them, and to stay true to them, but I also think no agent of capitalism is perfect. And so I think when we're thinking about Downtown Boys, I think that's part of why we're not like, "Yeah, let's start an arts organization," or "Let's start a non-profit." Because there's this thing that happens, where it's like you get so obsessed with the people who are in need or something that you can stop doing work to make that need obsolete. Now you need that need in order to make your non-profit exist.

That's part of why I love Downtown Boys. I almost see us as this political platform where we're beginning to pay ourselves more and more. It's not paying rent yet. It has, some months. I don't know if we're quite at the stage where we would incorporate ourselves. I also think that the economy of music is tough right now. Musicians and artists, we're not always seen as workers.

Madeline: "Do this for exposure. Do this to get yourself out there. We value you, but not enough to pay you so you can eat," kind of deal?

Victoria: Yeah.

Madeline: So then, when you create and perform art, how do you keep it from just becoming that empty thing? Because it seems like a lot of this stuff that you do, you do because it's a cause that matters to you.

Joey: I don't know that there'd be any other way to do it. If there weren't meaning—for me at least—I wouldn't do it anymore. I think I'm far off from ever not caring about it, never needing to do it. It's not like there's a big monetary benefit to us. I don't know; if it became meaningless, we wouldn't keep grinding away at it for no reason. So, the reason we're doing this to begin with is because we want to get this stuff out there and express this part of ourselves. I can't imagine that need going away at any point soon.

Adrienne: Or it becoming unfocused on those things. We are creating for other reasons. It's very much involving the things that we think are important and how we connect creatively to each other—going into the process of us writing new songs; working on a song until we feel that click. Until Joey starts jumping around real hard. We know it's not really ready until we have those moments when we're practicing. "Okay, this is ready," as a song or an experience. Those are really important moments for us.

Madeline: One of your common themes is immigration, have you ever considered doing a southern border tour?

Mary: I like the sound of a border tour.

Adrienne: We've been there.

Mary: We've played border towns. We've played Tijuana and Ensenada.

Madeline: Where did you play in Tijuana?

Mary: Club Mustache.

Victoria: McAllen, Texas is very pivotal for our band. We've actually played in McAllen twice. It's a border town in the Rio Grande Valley. Homeland Security and the U.S. Border Patrol has built up the passageway to get into the United States like a funnel. It starts really wide lower down in Mexico and it funnels up into the United States and it clogs. There are entry points all along the border, but then there's a funnel of migrants into the Rio Grande Valley. And there's a check point to get out of the Rio Grande Valley, so if you make it in there and you're undocumented, to get out is really, really difficult.

We went through the check points. The check points in the summertime had X-ray systems that the ACLU was actually in the process of fighting. They X-ray the cars to see if anyone else was hidden in them. It's really, really awful. In McAllen, there's a group of people fighting so hard for racial justice and economic justice and for freedom of all people. The first time we played in McAllen, the next day they were welcoming a caravan of the families of the forty-plus people from Ayotzinapa who are missing. The same people who put on the shows were organizing that. People are organizing things around reproductive health for undocumented people.

The second time that we went, they were opening up this new space called Yerberia Cultura. They put out this mix tape for Black Lives Matter; we're on there. It's just so incredible. It's the vanguard. It's so awesome.

Todd: So why is Downtown Boys a punk band? What was the decision to play punk and not another musical style?

Joey: I don't think there was a decision. It's the sound that we could make and so that's what we ended up doing. It's really it. I think

GUERRILLA BOYCOTT IS NOT GOING TO DO ANYTHING. I DON'T THINK WE WOULD PLAY A WAR MANUFACTURER'S STAGE AT SOUTH BY SOUTHWEST... OR THE ARMY RECRUITMENT STAGE–MAYBE WE WOULD PLAY THAT.

we listen to all different kinds of music and a lot of us are involved in different projects that we're trying to do in other styles. I think some—especially the more recent songs that we're writing—branch out a little bit more. We got together with the instrument set that we had. That was the noise that fit what we were trying to do and that we knew how to make.

Todd: It does sound that you have a lot of other influences coming around the edges.

Madeline: You play with a lot of artistic bands, but not other punk bands; it seems like a mentality thing a lot of the time versus a genre thing. Is that more of a byproduct of there just not being as many bands in the area?

Victoria: I think that some of it is kind of what's been projected on to us, but then also I think we do this thing where we really try

and make sure we never adjust to injustice. We do whatever we can to refuse adjusting to injustice. There's complicity involved in that, but then there's also re-traumatizing yourself and we're really trying to fight that historical trauma. Punk music has done that.

I think we get punk projected onto us because language around "fighting the system" and "ACAB" (All cops are bastards), has been somehow more popularized in punk, even though that type of stuff is totally in black jazz music, in Mexican Norteño music, obviously hip hop. And probably because of our race, our class, our gender.

And then the fact that we have been given access to DIY and punk spaces and then have taken advantage of that access—playing in warehouse spaces in Providence. If you're a brand new rock band, it's hard to book a show at some fancy venue, so you play in a warehouse space. I don't know—if we were all black and doing rap, would we be doing this? If we were all Latino and played horn instruments, would we be in a warehouse space? I think it's the result of who we are, where we have access to, and then where we take advantage of our access.

Madeline: So, why *full* communism (the title of Downtown Boys' first full-length record)? Who came up with the title for that?

Joey: I think we'd been talking about that title collectively for a while. Obviously, it's somewhat of a confrontational title and it's going to catch people's attention because of what communism means to people, especially in this country. Of course, we're not talking about any kind of authoritarian, existing communist state or past communist state—or false communist state—but rather creating a utopian future, one which we probably don't have a real model for. We have all this stuff on the record that is angry and it's confrontational, but it's also about some level of hope, right? Because if we're just nihilistic and hopeless about everything, we wouldn't be angry about this stuff anymore. So, behind all of this, you have to have some hope for a better, more just future in society and I think that's what we were trying to get across with the title.

Todd: What's the most powerful tiny moment that the band has produced for somebody in your family?

Mary: [to Victoria] It would have to be you. Victoria's grandma comes to our shows when we play in California.

Victoria: Yeah, my grandma who is really old comes. She's in her seventies. That's a huge one for me. It's so big. She's known me my whole life. When Selena would come on the radio, I would get this lawn ornament that she has and I would pretend it was a microphone and sing. She will still mention that. She'll see us in *Rolling Stone* and she'll be like, "Oh my god. It's just like when she was little." But, at this point, it's kind of incredible because we've all had family members come and it's been a really big deal. Mary's had her partner come. You [Mary] haven't had a bloodline family come, but your mom posting Minions and stuff on our Facebook, that's a huge deal.

Mary: [laughs] Minions stickers. Minions memes.

Adrienne: I'm from Michigan originally so when we go out to the Midwest, my family comes. My grandma, she's eighty-two and she comes out to our shows. For her and being part of her generation and where she grew up, she's just very interested in trying to understand how my life is—being a woman, being a gay woman. She is fascinated and extremely supportive. It's just interesting to watch her there and try to understand how she perceives all these things.

Todd: How does she perceive it? Has she shared with you?

Adrienne: Yes. We're really close. We talk a lot. She's just so proud of me. I think that she fell into the fast track of getting married then, "you are your husband's." So I think for her, it's a little vicarious in some ways, as well as with my mother. I think it's cool to watch them be so supportive in their different ways of what I'm doing and the chances that we're all taking.

It's very different than what success looks like in my grandmother's eyes. A lot of family. A lot of friends. It's really amazing. I think extending the definition of family—traveling for the last year and a half with this band and meeting all the people who everyone knows and are close with. Everybody had been working so hard to help each other and their different bands. Booked endless shows. It's really awesome to see the huge family we all have all across, into Canada, the U.S. and down into Mexico, and now into Europe soon.

Joey: Me and Norlan—and we come from very different experiences from each other growing up, so I'm not speaking for him here—but both of us haven't had much interaction with family coming to the shows. I think that's important for how I think about making decisions within the band—coming from these places where not a lot of people know what the fuck any of this stuff is about, or actively condemn it—that it's important to try to reach people who are in those kinds of family situations and to make your stuff accessible to those people. Not everyone is in a big city and has access to punk zines and secret warehouses and house shows. Whatever incision you can make into the mainstream, as long as it doesn't change yourself and what you're doing, is important

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to try to take because that's where you're going to reach all of these kids and people who don't know about these sorts of outlets or don't have access to these kinds of outlets.

Todd: And who would be open to it but just don't know it exists.

Joey: Right. Exactly. You're pissed off and you can see stuff growing up on MTV that spoke a little bit to what you're talking about. Rage Against The Machine could fit these political messages into these mainstream outlets and then you go and look at their records and they're saying these things, so you can go and talk to other people. You can go deeper into it, but if people are sort of boycotting that in a guerrilla way, I think it cuts off a lot of people from getting into it.

Victoria: I am not coming from growing up and having friends who had studs in their jackets, having records, or knowing about quote/unquote "Punk" with a capital P. Sometimes Joey will talk about his band in high school or Mary will talk about her previous bands. I think that's so cool. I didn't really get to go to shows 'til I was twenty-four.

Like Joey was saying, it's about making that incision because—basically everyone's mind and everyone's memory—culture is racing for it. It's almost kind of "get in there first" type of feeling. Neoliberalism wants Latino Americans to be really glossy, wear a lot of makeup, have a nice house, have that quote/unquote "American dream." We have to fight that.

Every time my family is actually into something we do or I see a lot of young Latino kids at shows, I'm like, "Yes!" It's more than building a bridge. It's actively remembering where we're coming from and continuing to be where we're coming from. I think sometimes we get seen as the "How come you guys believe in social justice?" Or "What can we do to make the world a better place?" and it's just kind of like, I don't really think that's a fair question for anyone to answer, but I also feel like we're being read wrong because it's not like we're trying to put out any type of self-righteous idea out there. We're just truly being who we are.

Madeline: Is that something that you think is a byproduct of bigger magazines like *Rolling Stone* or the *Washington Post* having a misreading of you or people in the community in general?

Victoria: I don't know if it's a misreading by anyone as much as—it tends to just be from people who don't really come to our shows and who are seeing us from afar.

Adrienne: We've talked about it a bit, the idea that this is a specialty thing—that you believe in activism and that's what you do—instead of it being, "This is something that we all can fight for, no matter what angle we're coming from." The idea that music is something—you make music, you become a professional musician. Music and art is something that everyone can do. Thinking about your world and the social justice that you deserve and the people around you deserve is something we all can practice. It should be something that we all are doing.

Victoria: It's just like another job. You have to work really hard.

Todd: If every venue could have one thing, what would it be good for it to have?

Joey: I'd say monitors. I feel like that's the biggest hazard. It mostly affects Victoria—screaming your brains out to be heard. You're three days in on a tour and your voice is fucked.

Madeline: A lot of those smaller and DIY venues probably don't have good mics for horns, either.

Adrienne: Or even the capacity to run the mic that I have. Need the ol' phantom power. It's not necessary, but it is a grade up on the experience for sure, to not be stuck on a microphone stand. It's nice. Monitors and a PA that compete with the guitar and bass amps and drum.

Joey: Good promoter.

Mary: I wish every venue had accessible bathrooms.

Madeline: What's the most upscale venue you have played?

Joey: We played on a boat this summer.

Adrienne: You guys played at MOMA (Museum of Modern Art, New York). That was pretty huge.

Joey: MOMA is fancy.

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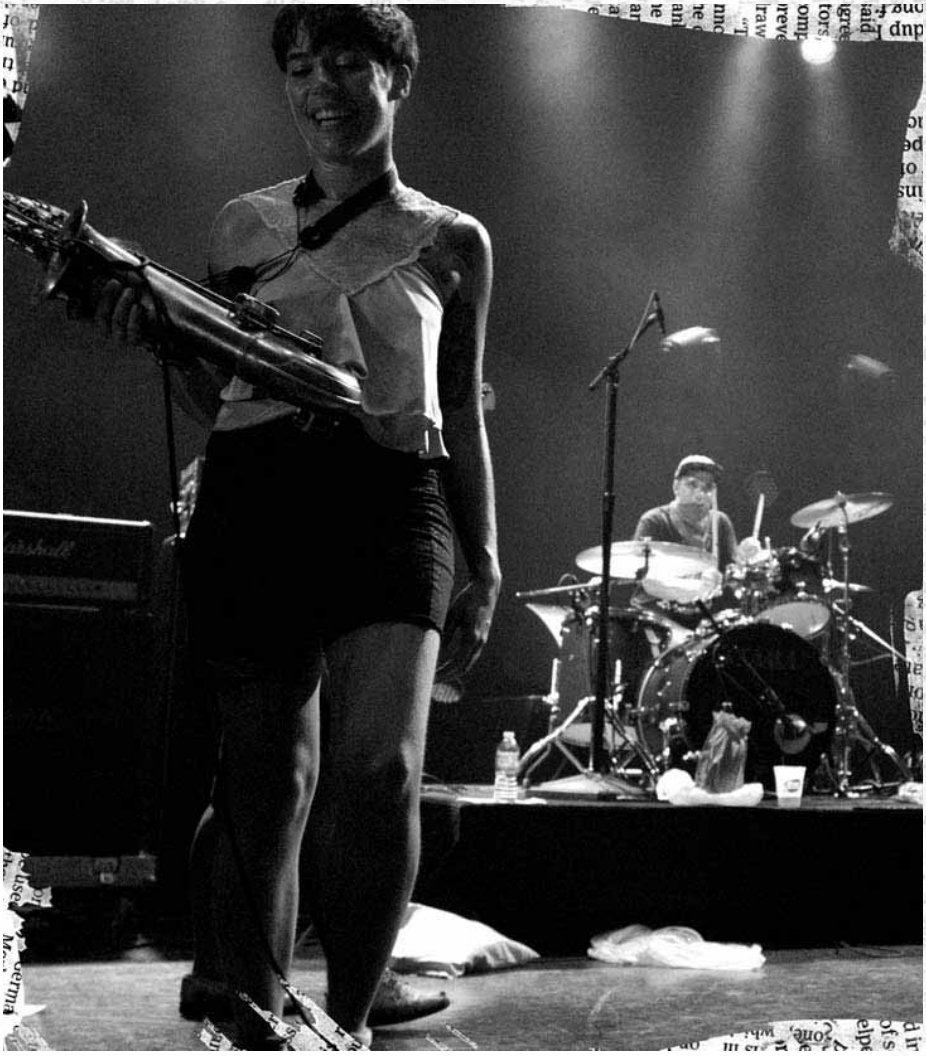
Adrienne: We played on *Democracy Now*. That was tight.
Mary: Like two weeks ago. It was great. We took selfies with Amy Goodman.
Adrienne: Amy was so pumped about us. We were so pumped about Amy. We had to muster all of our might and energy at 8:30 to 10:30 in the morning and play a set.
Todd: Did you rally?
Adrienne: Hell yeah.
Madeline: Were people dancing?
Joey: The crew was pretty pumped because they don't usually have loud, loud bands on the show. People were excited to have something unusual happening.
Adrienne: A lot of people stayed late, over the time they were supposed to be working to make it happen. It was cool.
Joey: It's a small studio, so they did a good job setting it up for us and we brought one of our own powered speakers to be a monitor. It was surprisingly DIY for us in the *Democracy Now* studio.
Todd: So, where did the band name Downtown Boys come from?
Joey: Well, it doesn't have a really deep meaning. I think we thought of band names "something boy," "something girl"—that genre of band name. Then Downtown Boys sounded kind of queer and tough at the same time. Perhaps subconsciously, because most of us are such Bruce Springsteen fans—it's actually in a Bruce Springsteen song. He says the line, "Downtown boys." So, it's been printed a few places that we named ourselves after that song, but that's not exactly true. It's sort of incidental. It was in our brains somewhere. It's funny. People see different things in it. A lot of people think Backstreet Boys.
Madeline: I thought the Beach Boys because I saw that record over in the kitchen. I was hoping it had to do with that.
Joey: I think it's kind of a silly name, but it's what we've got. It's fine.
Adrienne: There are a lot of ladies in the band, too. People are always like, "You guys aren't boys." How observant of you.
Joey: I guess it's maybe a subversion of the trend of all-bro bands naming themselves stuff like Brazilian Girls.
Todd: With your slumlord, are you going to slap him with glitter and have him not evict you because you're wearing gold go-go pants?
Joey: That was, incidentally, was one of the first feuds with the slumlord—filming that video in here and there was a big glitter mess everywhere. The next day, he was upset about the glitter, had to clean up the glitter. Maybe that will be part of our strategy, covering the building with glitter.
Madeline: As you're being evicted, just glitter bombing everything.
Joey: Nothing left to lose at this point.



THINKING ABOUT YOUR WORLD AND THE SOCIAL JUSTICE THAT YOU DESERVE AND THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU DESERVE SHOULD BE SOMETHING THAT WE ALL ARE DOING. VICTORIA: IT'S JUST LIKE ANOTHER JOB. YOU HAVE TO WORK REALLY HARD.

TOP FIVES
RAZORCAKE

Art Ettinger
• *MDC Memoirs from a Damaged Civilization: Stories of Punk, Fear and Redemption* by Dave Dictor (book)
• Half-A-Hellstomper, *The Greasy Sessions* CD
• ANTiSEEN / He Who Cannot Be Named, Split 7"
• Meat Market, *Dig Deep* LP
• Discipline, *Stake Your Claim* LP

Becky Rodriguez
1. L.A. Zine Fest 2016
2. Ollin's Annual St. Patrick's Day tribute to the Pogues
3. Meeting Alice Bag again and her signing my copy of *Pipe Bomb for the Soul*
4. Public art in downtown L.A.
5. Weeding my bookshelves

Billy Kostka
• Utah Jazz, *Ivory Wave*
• Glitter, Self-titled mini LP
• Urochromes, *Get in Line 4 Mental Decline*
• Institute, *Catharsis*
• Deformity, Self-titled 7"

Candace Hansen
Top 5 Things Giving Me Life Despite This Never-ending Flu
1. Dyke Drama, *Tender Resignation*
2. La Croix Peach Pear sparkling water.
3. Ragana, *Wash Away*
4. Feels from the international Girls Rock Camp Alliance Conference in Elmer, New Jersey.
5. Bad Cop/Bad Cop, *Not Sorry*

Chad Williams
Top 5 Shows of 2016 So Far
1. Riverboat Gamblers at Jackalope, Austin, 3/18
2. Dead To Me and Sciatic Nerve at Hemlock, SF, 1/17
3. Swingin' Utters at Hemlock, SF, 4/1
4. Power Trip, Mean Jeans, Radioactivity at Cheer Up Charlies, Austin, 3/17
5. Enforcer, Exmortus at Parkside, SF, 2/2

Chris Mason
1. Steel Chains, demo
2. Violence Creeps, *Soul Narc* LP
3. Basement Benders, live at New Scowling House
4. Lost Balloons, Self-titled LP
5. Patsy's Rats, Self-titled CS

Chris Terry
• Halfsour, *Tuesday Night Live* LP
• Turnstile, *Nonstop Feeling* LP
• Kendrick Lamar, *Untitled Unmastered* LP
• Kaitlyn Greenidge, *We Love You Charlie Freeman* (novel)
• Teaching my son to buttboard

Christina Zamora
1. Basement Benders, *Lydiad*
2. Sheer Mag, *III*
3. Lost Balloons, Self-titled
4. Various Artists, *Girls with Guitars*
5. Various Artists, *C'est Chic!, French Girl Singers of the 1960s*

Craven Rock
1. Phife Dawg and Jim Harrison, Rest in Power
2. Radon / Shallow Cuts, Split 7"
3. Ezra Furman, *Day of the Dog* CD
4. Pickled limeade at Vietnam Kitchen, Louisville, KY
5. Sole, *A Ruthless Criticism of Everything Existing* LP

Designated Dale's
Top Five Fave Quotes Regarding the Ramones
1. "A band like the Ramones doesn't come around once in a lifetime; they come around once." –Seymour Stein, Sire Records
2. "It's not just punk rock at its best, it's plain rock'n'roll at its finest." –Legs McNeil, *PUNK* fanzine
3. "The Ramones were special. That's why I wrote a song for them. They were better than they knew. Don't forget them." –Lemmy Kilmister, Motörhead
4. "Anyone who hates this record is an asshole." –Phast Phreddie Patterson, *Back Door Man* fanzine, referring to their 1976 debut LP, *Ramones*
5. "Hey, we're not students, we're the Ramones." –Johnny Ramone, in *Rock'n'Roll High School*

Daryl Gussin
• Pinned In Place, *Ghostwritten By* LP
• Pedal Strike CD, and live at Café NELA
• Loko Ono, live at 2k7 Broad
• Neighbors LP, and live at Pehrspace
• Steel Chains CS, and live at the Bike Oven

Eric Baskauskas
• Audacity, *Hyper Vessels*
• Blood Pressure, *Need to Control*
• Connoisseur, *Stoner Justice*
• Gag, *America's Greatest Hits*
• Strutter, Self-titled 7"

Garrett Barnwell
1. Catching Abjects at Gnarburger and attending Razorcakes's Drinking Beer and Listening to Records on the same day, 3/26/16!
2. Electro Insides, Self-titled 7"
3. The Speedlights, Self-titled CD
4. Silverhead, *16 and Savaged* LP
5. *Rolling Stone*'s hilarious "40 Greatest Punk Albums of All Time" online piece.

Jeff Proctor
Top 5 Shows of Late (and Upcoming)
1. The Bollweevils with Tiltwheel, at the Kensington Club, San Diego, March 25
2. Dan Padilla Last Show at the Casbah, San Diego, April 2, with Toys That Kill, Low Culture, Vena Cava
3. Toys That Kill with Octagrape at the Redwood, L.A., April 15
4. Save The Music In Chinatown at the Grand Star Jazz Club, L.A. with Mike Watt & The Secondmen, Spokenest, California, May 8
5. Burger Boogaloo 2016 at Mosswood Park, Oakland, June 25-26, with John Waters, Traci Lords, the Lyres, the Real Kids, Flamin' Groovies, the Spits, Dwarves, Angry Samoans, etc...

Jennifer Federico
Top 5 Ladies I Love Right Now
1. Manuela Iwansson, Terrible Feelings
2. Mary Animal, White Murder
3. Hannah Blumenfeld, White Murder
4. KY Ellie, Good Throb
5: Meghan O'Neil Pennie, Super Unison

Jimmy Alvarado
• La Tuya prepping to set the summer ablaze
• Hate, Self-titled EP
• Various Artists, *The Music of Islam* CD
• *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*, by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz (book)
• *Lady Snowblood*, directed by Toshiya Fujita

Jim Ruland
1. Keith Morris, Alice Bag, Michelle Gonzales and Michael Fournier at Pehrspace.
2. Red Dons, *The Dead Hand of Tradition*
3. Exhumed / Iron Reagan, Split 12"
4. Rites Of Spring, *Six Song Demo*
5. Shiprock, New Mexico

John Miskelly
• Ministerio de Agricultura (Madrid)
• Acapvlco (Valencia)
• Ulises Lima (Madrid)
• Betunizer (Valencia)
• La Residencia, (Valencia. Not actually a band, a venue, but a very awesome venue)

John Mule
1. *Axe Brother Podcast*: *Event Horizon* Episode
2. Napalm Death at The Observatory
3. Conan, *Revengeance*
4. Warbler Records, Santa Barbara, CA
5. Throwback pick: Repulsion, *Horrified*

Teaching my son to buttboard.

Juan Espinosa

• Urochromes 7" tie with Rüz 7"
• Private Room, *Life Com* 7"
• Mind Spiders, *Prosthesis* LP
• Dreamdecay, *Frank* cassette single
• Crazy Spirit, "3rd" 7"

Kayla Greet

Top 5 LA Vaycay Moments
1. Razorcake <3s Listening to Records event at Footsies
2. Watching The Bollweevils, and not Luicidal at the Viper Room
3. Teaching Todd pinball skills at EightyTwo, b/w recording a podcast together
4. Ripping up *Gone Girl* and reading *Black Hole* by Bucky Sinister instead
5. Playing the host of another pinball podcast (*Coast2Coast*) and winning

Kevin Dunn

1. Flower, *Waste of Life*
2. Bob Mould, *Patch the Sky*
3. Alright, Self-titled 7"
4. Kevin Second's regular releases on Patreon
5. Birthday Suits, *Spin the Bottle: Adult Party*

Kurt Morris

1. Slayer, *Repentless*
2. Small Brown Bike, *Fell & Found*
3. TW Walsh, *Fruitless Research*
4. Beach Boys, *Pet Sounds*
5. Slayer, *World Painted Blood*

Louis Jacinto

My Top 5 Punk Films
1. *Los Punks: We Are All We Have*
2. *Los Punks: We Are All We Have*
3. *Los Punks: We Are All We Have*
4. *Los Punks: We Are All We Have*
5. *Los Punks: We Are All We Have*

Matt Werts

• CCTV, *Practice Tape 3.6.16*
• Minutemen, *Post-Mersh Vol. 3*
• Laraaji, *All in One Peace*
• Ghost Orchard, *Bliss*
• Elvis Costello & The Attractions, *Blood & Chocolate*

Marty Ploy

• Sheer Mag, *III* 7"
• Macho Boys, demo
• Listen Lady, Self-titled 7"
• Decent Criminal, Self-titled LP
• Bad Cop / Bad Cop, *Not Sorry* LP

Michael Fournier

• *Clorox Boy*, by Justin Maurer (zine)
• *Cassingle in Chapbook Form*, by Tobias Carroll
• Reading w/ Alice Bag, Keith Morris and Michelle Gonzales at Pehrspace, L.A., CA 4/2/16
• Milling Gowns, Daephne at O'Brien's, Boston, MA 3/12/16
• White Murder, *Form Early* LP

Mike Faloon

1. Basement Benders, *Lydiad* LP
2. The Chills, *Silver Bullets* LP
3. Robert Pollard, *Faulty Superheroes* LP
4. Salad Boys, *Scarce Tracks* 7" EP
5. Various Artists, *Bloodshot Six Pack to Go: Working Songs for Drinking People*

Mike Frame

1. Swingin' Utters, *Streets of San Francisco* LP
2. Robbie Fulks, *Upland Stories* CD
3. Loretta Lynn, *Full Circle* CD
4. *The Big Short* (movie)
5. Bonnie Jo Campbell, *Once upon a River* (book)

Naked Rob
Radio Valencia | San Francisco

1. The Monsters, *The Jungle Noise Recordings* LP
2. Victims, *Sirens* LP
3. L.I., *On the Corner* LP
4. Bullet Treatment, *Bloodshot: Chapter 1* EP
5. Rough Kids, Self-titled LP

Nick Toerner

• The Brokedowns, *Life Is a Breeze* LP
• Good Shade, Self-titled LP
• Tenement, *Predatory Headlights* 2 x LP
• Edhochuli, *Dream Warriors* LP
• Dopamines, *Guided by Vices* flexi 7"

Patrick Houdek

1. Tim Beaty, RIP
2. Tim Beaty Mr.#1derful Memorial Show at Lost Cross, Carbondale, Ill., April 2, 2016
3. Pegboy, Dan Vapid, The Cheats, The Brokedowns, Dethwarrant at Chop Shop, Chicago, Ill. April 9, 2016
4. MDC, The Bollweevils, Death And Memphis, Deathwish at Liar's Club, Chicago, Ill. April 8, 2016
5. Moving to Denver, Colo.

Paul Silver

1. Pears, *Green Star* LP
2. Free Kittens & Bread, *American Miserablist* LP
3. Mind Spiders, *Prosthesis* LP
4. Dan Padilla's last show at The Casbah, San Diego, with too many awesome bands from around the country to list
5. The Bollweevils, White Kaps, Tiltwheel, Western Settings, Darlington at The Ken Club, San Diego

Replay Dave

• Merle Haggard, *Roots, Vol. 1*
• Dan Padilla / Prince, Split 7"
• Doctor Bison, *The Bloated Vegas Years*
• Quicksand, *Slip*
• Seaweed, *Weak*

Rich Cocksedge

• Stiff Little Fingers live at Phoenix Arts Centre, Exeter, UK
• Bob Mould, *Patch the Sky* LP
• Go White Bronco, *Population: Ghost Town* LP
• Muncie Girls, *From Caplan to Belsize* LP, tie with Colour Me Wednesday, *Anyone and Everyone* EP
• The New Christs, *Live 2011* CD

Ryan Leach

Top 5 Labels at the Moment
1. Goodbye Boozy
2. 12XU
3. Selection
4. Windian
5. Solid Sex Lovie Doll

Ryan Nichols

1. Iggy Pop, *Post Pop Depression*
2. Iggy Pop, *Post Pop Depression*
3. Iggy Pop, *Post Pop Depression*
4. Spectres, *Utopia*
5. Plague Vendor, *Bloodsweat*

Sal Lucci

1. *Trouble Boys: The True Story of the Replacements* (book)
2. *The Dicks from Texas* DVD
3. *Destroy All Art* LP
4. Modernettes, *Teen City* LP
5. Nameless Frames LP

Sean Arenas

• Purple 7, *Garden Eyes* LP
• Crybaby, *Drag Me Under* LP
• Behavior, *375 Images of Angels* LP
• High Dive, *New Teeth* LP
• Malastare, Self-titled EP

Sean Koepenick

Books I Am Looking forward to Reading
1. *Making of Ziezo* by Alvin Gibbs
2. *Under the Big Black Sun* by John Doe
3. *Chapter and Verse* by Bernard Sumner
4. *Wire, Pink Flag* by Wilson Neate
5. *Complicated Game, Inside the Songs of XTC* by Andy Partridge and Todd Bernhardt

Simone Carter

• Culture Abuse, *Peach*
• Future Of The Left, *The Peace & Truce of Future of the Left*
• Iggy Pop, *Post Pop Depression*
• Lee Hazlewood, *Trouble Is a Lonesome Town*
• Jucifer, *Calling All Cars on the Vegas Strip*

Susan de Place

Best new vinyl purchases (for debut at Razorcake/Vermin on the Mount readings with Alice Bag, Keith Morris, Michelle Gonzales, and Michael Fournier)
1. Chroma, *Cuerpos Dóciles* LP (huge thank you to Grave Mistake Records!)
2. Exit Order 7" EP
3. Patsy, "*Eat It" b/w "Insidious Kind"* 7"
4. Nots, "*Fix" b/w "Modern"* 7"
5. Suicidas, "*Los Primeros"* 7" LP (another huge thank you to DJ of Shadow Age!)

Steve Adamyk

1. Everything by The Blind Shake
2. New Colleen Green EP
3. Miscalculations, *Kill the Whole Cast*
4. Video, *The Entertainers*
5. Urochromes

Tim Brooks

• No Tolerance, *You Walk Alone* LP
• Phylums, "*Decisions: b/w "Vexed"*
• Nasty Facts, *Drive My Car* EP
• Last Crusade LP
• Lost Balloons LP

Toby Tober

Top 5 Movies I Have Recently Enjoyed
1. *Land of Mine*
2. *Horace and Pete*
3. *Only the Dead See the End of War*
4. *Infinitely Polar Bear*
5. *Jane Wants a Boyfriend*

Todd Taylor

• Mind Spiders, *Prosthesis* LP
• Pinned In Place, *Ghostwritten By* LP
• Daylight Robbery, *Accumulated Error* LP
• Juanita Y Los Feos, *Nueva Numancia* LP
• Joyride!, *Bodies of Water* LP
• Alice Bag, Keith Morris, Michelle Gonzales, and Michael T. Fournier reading at Pehrspace, L.A., CA 4/2/16

Tommy Vandervort

1. The Bollweevils SoCal tour
2. Pegboy, Brokedowns, Dethwarrant, Dan Vapid at Chop Shop
3. DFMK 7"
4. Running Anxious & Angry while Ryan Young was in Australia
5. Razorcake family and all my friends in SoCal for once again rolling out the red carpet.

Ty Stranglehold

1. Bad Future, Self-titled
2. Mind Spiders, *Prosthesis*
3. Bum Out, *Pain Don't Hurt*
4. The Mants, *Do the Dummy*
5. The Lucky Boys EP

RECORD REVIEWS

ACID FAST*: Last Night on Earth:* LP
Not immediately catching, but like the feeling you're left with after your best friend goes home after a sleep over, you'll flip it over and over, anticipating the needle drop as much as the next friendship overnighter. Open and warm, an LP to float through the window leading to the porch on a sun-beaten summer day. Not breezy tunes, but tight music made by and for tight friends. Harkens to early '90s Gainesville or Midwest basement shows. Unafraid to get weird, get dirty, or put their heart on the line. Take this album to your next grill and chill punk party. –Matt Seward (Salinas)

ACOUSMA: *2nd EP:* 7"
Absolutely blistering hardcore from Nova Scotia. Hits me like a leaner, meaner Asshole Parade. All four tracks represented here sound as if someone snuck in the control room during recording and turned the knob labeled "brutal" up to ten. Also worthy of mention is the seriously wonderful art contained on the cover and included lyric poster. Top notch and highly recommended. –Garrett Barnwell (High Fashion Industries)

ADVLTS: *Black Bile:* 7" EP
This is grimy-sounding punk rock with echoes of late '70s punk. The songs include the requisite guitar feedback of that style—though I can still hear the drums and bass—and I enjoy that quite a lot. My one complaint is that there isn't much variation in style—which, when I think about it, isn't a true complaint because I like grimy-sounding punk rock. That being said, this EP comes with a digital download code, which is cool. –Becky Rodriguez (Firestarter / Toxic Pop, toxicpoprecords@gmail.com, toxicpoprecords.com)

AH FUCK / RUSH AWESOME: Split: CS
AhFuck: guitar and bass accompaniment to a dystopian future where technology has outsmarted itself. Agonized vocals echo in and sit down next to you to share in your frustration and to remind you that life is meaningless but beautiful. Rush Awesome: droplets of colorful sound bouncing off your brain before leading you into a labyrinth of perpetual ambient bliss. Expert use of tape looping reveals true artistic craftsmanship. Fucking brilliant through and through. –Juan Espinosa (Gilgongo, gilgongorecords.com)

ALEJANDRO ESCOVEDO: *Kicked out of Eden:* CD
The latest solo effort by this Zero is a potent mix of raucous rock that reeks of late nights in Texas and New York bars, '60s pop, power pop, and the Dollsy punk he and his ol' band cut their teeth on four (!) decades back. Grade-A soundtrack to drink way too much and dance way too long into the night. Never, ever dismiss the OGs out of hand, kids. –Jimmy Alvarado (Saustex)

ALL BRIGHTS, THE: *...Are Wild for the Night:* CD
"I just wanna girl with a coupla tits / and a sandwich in a hand basket." Shakespeare? Lovecraft? Crass? No. It's California's All Bright's. The music is tight, West Coast punk rock'n'roll, but the lyrics sound like the product of someone's midlife crisis. This is essentially a concept album about life on the beach. It's been done before and in much more interesting ways. Sorry to bust up the frat party, bros. –Jon Mule (Red Scare Industries)

AMY O: *Arrow:* CS
Amy O is the eponymous project of Brenda's Friend collaborator and all-around adorable singer-songwriter Amy Oelsner. Featuring ten compositions that feel childlike without seeming naive, willowy without seeming insubstantial and familiar without seeming trite, *Arrow* tiptoes merrily along the border between top-secret diary entries and cheeky abstract poetry. Though the twee quality of Oelsner's vocals may initially be a hard sell for some listeners, they never venture into the realm of affectation; her winning earnestness is likely to soften even the hardest of hearts. While the lead vocal is consistently strong, Oelsner's voice paired with that of backing vocalist Madeline Robinson occasionally resembles slightly off-time double-tracking, especially when the two singers are echoing a single melody rather than harmonizing. However, when those distinct harmonies do emerge—such as on the sugary title track—they soar, improving even further with the addition of guitarist Chris Clements' voice on the lazily wistful, twang-infused "Honeysuckle." Overall, *Arrow* is another irresistible bittersweet treat from Amy O. –Kelley O'Death (Let's Pretend, letspretendrecs@gmail.com, letspretendrecords.com)

ANGRIES: *Hollowed Out:* CS
Contrary to their name, rumors suggest that the Corvallis quartet Angries are actually really fucking nice people. Their eleven-song debut spends twenty minutes conveying well-curated rage through melodic punk rock with the barreling energy of a freight train. Moving between catchy hooks, '80s hardcore, and '90s riot grrrl vibes, *Hollowed Out* has something for everyone. Get your catchy gang vocals fix in "Hollow Days" and furious pit vibes from "Tolerance." the closing track, "Raped Culture," is my favorite and one of the most interesting tracks on the cassette. It opens with dark, disjuncted bass chords before dropping into fast, straight-ahead punk rock, eventually echoing the repetitive trope of The Exploited's "Sex and Violence" in a punk feminist critique on American rape culture. Silver glitter cassettes, bold cover art, and a clean DIY insert make this self release feel exciting to listen to and easy to follow. While I wish the mix was a bit more bass- and drums-heavy, it will definitely stay in rotation. I'm stoked to see what these folks have up their sleeve for 2016. –Candace Hansen (Self-released, angries.bandcamp.com)

ANGRY COUGARS: Self-titled: LP
About twenty years ago, I remember reading the liner notes to some album in which the writer related the story of how, when his uncle heard the Sonics for the first time back in the '60s, he jumped up, bonked a bookshelf with his head, and emphatically exclaimed "HOT DAMN! THIS SOUNDS LIKE A BUNCHA (N-WORDS)!" The writer continued by detailing that he had a similar reaction upon his first listen to whatever band it was for which he had written said liner notes, but, being a well-behaved lad, his emphatic exclamation was remiss the racial slur—his point (on which I am offering no opinion whatsoever) being something akin to, "White dudes who play raw, wild rock'n'roll don't sound like white dudes. They sound like black dudes." I had somewhat of a parallel experience with the Angry Cougars, although my experience was wholly devoid of real or imagined racial overtones: I had *no fucking idea* until I got to the second-to-the-last song that this band's singer wasn't a guy, and the only thing that tipped me off was a gender reference. Now, not to open up a vast and hugely boring can of worms, but, in my antediluvian reptilian forebrain, I just jumped up, bonked my head on a bookshelf, and yelled "HOT DAMN! THIS SOUNDS LIKE A DUDE!" and there was much rejoicing. Betty Machete rips shit UP, man! The drums go POUND POUND POUND and the guitar goes GNAW GNAW GNAW, and brother, you'll have a bookshelf-shaped dent in your head right quick if you know what's best for you. BEST SONG: "Beat Your Ass." BEST SONG TITLE: "Bullet?" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: The vinyl has each song title etched in the wax before each song! Fucking brilliant! –Rev. Nørb (Breakup)

ATLANTIC THRILLS: *Vices:* CD
Totally well-done mélange of garage, surf, and a sprinkling of psychedelia. Picture, if you will, 1967-era Brian Wilson and Syd Barrett jamming with the members of the Cramps, the Raveonettes, and the Ventures. This was just what I needed to drive away the Southern California marine-layer blues (yes, such a thing exists). –Garrett Barnwell (Almost Ready)

AUF BEWÄHRUNG: *Nachtschatten:* LP
I first heard of Auf Bewährung (No Probation) earlier this year when it was announced as support to Night Birds in Frankfurt, a show I am due to attend. Internet searches resulted in me finding a gritty anti-fascist punk rock band which sounded pretty good, especially its cover of "Bonzo Goes to Bitburg." I then get hold of the band's new album *Nachtschatten* (*Nightshade*), and discovered that Auf Bewährung had clearly taken a couple of steps forward towards a more mature sound without losing any of its edge. The evolution is one which I definitely approve of, as the songs have better structures and have more longevity than anything else I'd heard from the group. I can't comment on the lyrics, as my German is non-existent, but it does seem that the group has kept the leftist ideals previously espoused when checking out its social media presence. My inability to understand the lyrics hasn't detracted from my enjoyment of this record one iota and I'm now excited at the prospect of seeing the band where I'll be singing along as best as I phonetically can. –Rich Cocksedge (Twisted Chords, twisted-chords.de, mailorder@twisted-chords.de)

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AVENUE Z: *Azimut:* CD
Never in my life did I ever think I would become a fan of weirdo synthesizer music, yet here we are. Avenue Z is a French band that is predominately synth and trashy guitar-driven. If you are thinking of some unholy spawn of The Spits and Mind Spiders, you would be definitely on the right track. I am quickly becoming obsessed with this album. It is sung in French, but the lyric sheet is translated into English and Japanese. I love how the mood can switch up so quickly from track to track, from fuzz guitar spazz out to effects-laden groove trips and back again. I can't get enough of this. –Ty Stranglehold (Slovenly, slovenly.com)

BACKBITER: *Fvck the Bozos:* CS
Gone is the pretense, gone is the pose. Now is the time for Backbiter; an unreckoned force of aggression and progression in a climate of contrived "experimentation" and calculated, genre-self-imprisoning. Like fellow Pacific Northwest bands G.L.O.S.S. and The Angries, the sound is based in straight-forward hardcore punk—but with knowledge, appreciation, and dabbling execution of the many sub-sub-genres hardcore has spawned over the decades—making the sound fresh, vital, and totally uncompromising. –Daryl (Dirt Cult)

BACKSLIDER: *Motherfucker:* LP
Definitely interesting how they combine some serious rock swagger with down-tuned, punishing, bass-heavy mayhem and occasional blurs of metal and blitzkrieg powerviolence. Deep, nuanced recording and excellent musicianship by this trio that describes themselves as "total pain rock." Unfortunately, the over-the-top, constipated-scary-monster vocals come dangerously close to souring the entire affair for this delicate listener. –Keith Rosson (Six Weeks)

BAD FUTURE: Self-titled: LP
It's been about a year since I reviewed Bad Future's debut album *Golden Age*. That album kicked my ass (and still does), as did the *Nightchurch* EP that followed. I lucked into a copy of this, their sophomore album, the last time I was down in Seattle. I say lucked into, not only because it is amazing, but because as of right now it has only been released in Europe. The album picks up right where *Nightchurch* left off. The songs are intricate, but not in a nerdy, math rock way. It's just heavy, with lots going on. Not poppy, but very catchy. I find myself singing their songs to myself all the time. I've said it before, and I will say it again and again. Bad Future is one of the best bands in Seattle right now (and that is saying something, considering you can chuck a rock in the Emerald City and hit a rad band) and it is mind blowing that this isn't out in North America. If I had the dough, I'd be putting it out yesterday. My advice is to track a copy down as soon as you can and hope the shipping doesn't rub you raw. –Ty Stranglehold (Phobiact)

BAD INDIANS / MILK DICK: Split: 7" EP
Bad Indians: Garage rock with a bit more jangle than grime in the guitars. Milk Dick: Vaselines-amateur level indie rock stuff with a bit of early Velvets peeking out in places, which might unintentionally sound kinda like a diss, but they are quite good at what they do. –Jimmy Alvarado (Glad Fact)

BAZOOKA: *Useless Generation:* CD
You don't hear a ton of modern Greek punk, but here's one worthy of your ears. "Garage" has become a bit of a dirty word these days, and if you're thinking the '90s and skinny ties, you're all fucking wrong. I'm talking Timmy Vulgar garage, Clone Defects and Piranhas garage. Fucked-up, scary shit that sounds like people holed up with Los Saico's records, guitars, and drugs. I've heard people throw around the psych label for this band, but I ain't hearing it. Hard-as-fuck garage punk, as if one of those obscure '60s punk unknowns took mescaline and beat up your dad. Lyrics in Greek, translated in English. Feeling it. –Tim Brooks (Slovenly)

BEACH PATROL: *Eudaimonia:* CD
I wish I wrote reviews for *Roctober*, then my whole review could be "You-da-MAN-i-a!" or "Eudaimoniamania!" or even the wrestling-themed "EU! DAI-ROCKS! EU! DAI-ROCKS!" but I do not, so you'll just have to bear with me. I don't recall too many albums out of twenty-first century Green Bay I've enjoyed more than their debut, *The Grass Is Always Greener Til You Get There* (which, for me, came out about two or three cars ago, when these guys were either still in high school or perilously close to it), but their two follow-ups seemed to be meandering towards that sort of dull, capable, mature Americana that seemingly appeals to no one other than people who write for local music papers and members of other bands who play that sort of dull, capable, mature Americana. With *Eudaimonia* (it's a Green Bay thing, you wouldn't understand) (okay, actually it's an Aristotle thing. You still wouldn't understand), however, the band appears to have figured out what they want to sound like now that they're (gak!) thirty, and, thankfully, it's not some overly housebroken attempt at proficient mediocrity. *Nay!* This album is sort of like having Elvis Costello, John Cougar Mellencamp, Ray Davies, Greg Kihn, and Mike Gent imitating Mick Jagger all taking turns farting in your mouth, but the interiors of their desiccated husks are a geode-like prism of Pixy Stix filling, so you taste nothing but the hearty tang of ascorbic acid and natural sweeteners! *Look! They have finally become a beautiful butterfly! ADORE THEM! ADORE THEM!* BEST SONG: "Line 'Em Up." BEST SONG TITLE: I dunno, but isn't it weird how "Flower in the Dark" comes right after "Standing in the Light?" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Fuck do I hate Cooper Black. Good work. –Rev. Nørb (Barely Standing, barelystandingrecords.com)

BEHAVIOR / MAXWELL GENDER: Split: CS
I seem to remember Behavior opening up a show stacked with chaotic punk acts and being rather impressed with their unique brand of unhinged noise punk. Their contributions on this split resemble that particular night's performance more so than their recently released debut album *375 Images of Angels* which is far more artful and conceptualized. No matter, Behavior are still a genius of a band and right up your dark alley whether you're into Brainbombs and/or Raspberry Bulbs. Maxwell Gender serve up two tracks of a very compelling take on experimental anti-music with soundscapes looped and spliced with pulsating rhythms, dark and stormy field recordings, and an overall horror/suspense film creepiness. Fans of Vatican Shadow and John Carpenter soundtracks should know what to expect. Excellent pairing of equally captivating acts. –Juan Espinosa (Squid, squidrecords.info)

BEHAVIOR: *375 Images of Angels:* LP
Do you consider Shellac's *1000 Hurts* to be easy listening? Do you crave the dulcet tones of Pissed Jeans' rabid howls? Do you find that hardcore and punk often conform to cookie-cutter tones and arrangements? If so, Behavior might be what you're looking for. The jagged guitar erratically screeches over the skeletal rhythm section, while the vocalist spews stream of consciousness rants: "She sells them dry paint or the marble in Athens / Thought the image of the robin was a flash of fire / We thought the clue was a solution." Uninhibited and raw, Behavior eschews mainstream musicality and crafts noisescapes that, like a hypnosis wheel, entrance you with their atmosphere and defiant illogic. –Sean Arenas (Iron Lung)

BESMIRCHERS, THE: *Hard on Love:* 7"
Here are some gross perverts making gross pervert music. You've got a couple of choices with this record. You could get all caught up in a moral quandary, questioning your sense of right and wrong as you rock out to these super fast and super tight tunes about Hitler and rape and boners and Liberace. Or you could just smash a beer bottle against you're head until you're bloody and go with the flow. Either way, the Besmirchers probably don't give a shit. –MP Johnson (Slope)

BLESSED ISLES, THE: *Straining Hard against the Strength of Night:* CD
Straining Hard against the Strength of Night is the long-awaited first proper label release from Brooklyn shoegaze dream pop duo The Blessed Isles. You can definitely hear a lot of dark new wave influence here: Cocteau Twins, The Cure, and at times even a little Sisters Of Mercy, but freshened up to appeal to twenty-first century pop sensibilities through creative synth and vocal interplay. Beautiful arrangements cradle soft and thoughtful vocals, an aesthetic mirrored in the textural album artwork featuring lush purples and whites over dark photos of the Icelandic coast. As some shoegaze tends to do, the writing feels a little serious at times, but after working on a debut release for over three years I can only imagine the intention and contemplation that went into each detail of the production. When I was eighteen I would have totally bumped this while over-applying eyeliner in preparation of a long night of drinking wine coolers in the parking lot of the twenty-one and over indie night held at a local sushi restaurant, in other words: ambitious, nascent, pure cool. –Candace Hansen (Saint Marie, saintmarierecords.com)

BLOOD PRESSURE: *Need to Control:* LP
Another corker of a release from these cats. Full-on thrash reminiscent of early Midwestern hardcore, especially Negative Approach, with additional heaps of virulence pumped in for good measure. The band thrashes shit up while the singer howls about subjects personal and political, within and without the scene—drone warfare, police brutality, isolation, scene parasites, and so on. The kind of release that makes you look at the run-out groove and think, "Fuck, damned shame they didn't cram even more tunes on there." Good, good stuff. –Jimmy Alvarado (Beach Impediment)

BLOODTYPES, THE: *Pull the Plug:* CD
Remember how rad The Epoxies were? Miss them? Well dry those tears, dear friend! Fret not. The Bloodtypes fill that Roxy Epoxy hole in your heart, and with pleasure. This is the third release (and second full length) from this synth-science pop band. There's so much crazy controlled chaos going on. Songs like "Panic" are so fast they're likely to induce the very same feeling within you. "Going Away" is done in a call-and-response style and has some of the best vocal blasts, in my opinion. "Modern Love" taps into that piercing, melodic sound of the '80s, (i.e. Siouxie And The Banshees, Adam And The Ants). The titular track covers the struggle between becoming a Luddite or embracing the tech age. Based on the title, I bet you can guess which path they chose. If you're in the mood for dancey, keyboard-riddled, sci-fi pop punk, look no further. –Kayla Greet (Bomb Pop, bombpoprecords.com)

BLOODY KNIVES: *I Will Cut Your Heart out for This:* CD
Tedious electro whine music. I'm not sure how they made this record without the synthesizers shorting out from all the tears. –MP Johnson (Saint Marie, saintmarierecords.com)

BOBGOBLIN: *Love Lost for Blood Lust:* CD
The legacy of Devo is front and center on this one, in both Bobgoblin's sartorial choices and the humans-converted-into-robots sound of the tunes. I loved both parts. Bobgoblin's sound is like an unapologetically poppier (in a good way) version of Devo. Imagine the *New Traditionalists*-era Devo with the derisive, ironic mudslinging replaced by a more melancholic take on

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existence. The whole record is catchy and infectious while simultaneously grim. It was well worth my time. –The Lord Kveldulfr (Motor Forces)

BORN DEPRIVED:
***Party Hard Core Punk:* CD**
Figuring prominently in their logo on the cover is a pot leaf, which means this can go one of two ways: the first is that the weed could result in the band tapping into some deep pit of creativity, whereupon they push against staid boundaries and come up with truly fresh and new ideas that make it a joy to play that shit as loud as possible while screaming, "Yes, *sweet minty jesus, yes*! Artistes they is!" Sadly, the band under scrutiny went for option two: play loose, sloppy hardcore that sounds like most of their rehearsal time is spent trading bong rips and melting into the carpet. Funny for all the wrong reasons. –Jimmy Alvarado (SBS)

BRAT FARRAR:
***Being with You Last Night:* 7"**
The latest offering from Brat Farrer—for those who are familiar—is more of the same quality synth punk that you'd expect. If you're unfamiliar with Australia's Sam Agostino (of Digger & The Pussycats fame), Brat Farrar is the moniker of his solo project (with full live band) that typically consists of him with a drum machine and tuneful, but rockin', melodies. In the same league as Teledrome, but not quite as aggro as Black Bug. This new three-track platter doesn't break the mold, but is strong and catchy, just like his previous records. While the A side is more upbeat, "Feel This Way" on the flip is my personal tops. Great tunes and nice guy in person, to boot. Track this down if this genre is up your alley. –Steve Adamyk (Hound Gawd)

BROKEN BONES: *Vigilante:* 7" EP
Four tracks of metal-tinged U.K. hardcore pretty much along the lines of what one has come to expect from 'em. Tempos bounce around from mid-pace to thrashy 'n' angry, with the closer, "City Fodder," the closest resemblance to their earliest output. Like sister band, Discharge, they keep close to their "sound" here, with results that will whet the appetites of their fans. Thumbs up. –Jimmy Alvarado (Dr. Strange)

BUM OUT: *Pain Don't Hurt:* CS
I am a cranky old man who doesn't like cassettes because my tape player is broken and can't be bothered to get a new one. That said, I am sure fucking glad I made the effort to play this because this is what it's all about. These are the kinds of songs that bounce around in my head on a regular basis. If I was at all able to play a guitar, I think I would write songs in the same vein as Bum Out. They're quick and catchy with a lot of heart. Texas for the win again! –Ty Stranglehold (Twistworthy)

CARNIVAL, THE: *Hengen Juhlaa:* 7" EP
Some primo, smokin' hardcore outta Finland that crushes flat anything that comes within hearing distance. The metallic influence in evidence is tempered. They keep things largely to the point and the tunes zipping right on by. –Jimmy Alvarado (Paha Tukka Elämä Levyt, facebook.com/BadHairLifeRecords)

CAVE CURSE: *"Stoned & Dethroned" b/w "Out of Time": 7"*
This is a side project of a member of The Hussies with melodic, stabby synth riffs and a cold, robotic drum machine. Perhaps because it's a side project and less developed, it owes a bit *too* much to Gary Numan and Stan Ridgeway. Seriously, if you told me this has all been an elaborate prank and I've actually been listening to Wall Of Voodoo, I might believe you. I've got plenty of Wall Of Voodoo, so I might spin this a few more times, but it's not a keeper. I'd like to see where it goes, though. –Craven Rock (Volar)

CHICOS DE NAZCA: *Fire Ride:* LP
People love to throw the "psych" label around, but seldom is the music psychedelic. This shit is bona-fide psych. Kids whacked out of their noggins psych. I have no idea what the fuck is going on in the hills of Santiago Chile, but these kids are smoking it. Shimmering and hypnotic, it sounds like the bastard offspring of the 13th Floor Elevators, Loop, and Spacemen 3 but with some indie sensibilities of Ride and the Inspiral Carpets. This, my dear friends, is drug music. Pick your poison, but I would advise sending your brain to another dimension to soak this shit up. Me? I fucking love it. See you in outer space. –Tim Brooks (Hozac)

CIRCLE K: Self-titled: 7" EP
Simple-as-fuck hardcore with the kinda blown-out, ultra-shit-fi sound quality one expects from garage rock bands that've just discovered the Mummies. –Jimmy Alvarado (Glad Fact)

CLARABELLE AND THE CREEPS: *The Modern Underground Sound of Muscle Shoals Soul:* LP
I fell in love with this record from the moment the needle hit the wax. Then I did some research on the band and found out that I loved them even more. It was like having a major crush on someone and then discovering that they're both single and interested in you. This musical outfit is extremely eclectic—tambourine, saxophone, accordion—but one of the greatest instruments that certainly reaches its highest potential, is Clarabelle's voice. After the first spin I was catching remnants of Shannon And The Clams with Hunx And His Punx as the backing band. Songs are cutesy, tongue-in-cheek, and sweet. They're about being in love with vampires and ghouls, and whining about dumb boys. Then came the realization that Clarabelle is fourteen years old and that her dad (of the Pine Hill Haints) started this band up for her specifically. Their cover of Dion And The Belmonts' "Teenager in Love" is so much more apt now. As are lyrics like, "I hate these guys / I want to

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be just like them / I just wanna dance," and "Dumb boys / I don't like them / I guess I'll always be frustrated." I usually hate it when a band is heralded for being comprised of people outside the narrow binary of punk rock (i.e. non-white, straight males), but in this case I feel it's worth noting. This teen has some serious chops and one of those "old soul" voices with just a tinge of Cyndi Lauper. Musically, The Creeps are similar to the Ronnettes and Ritchie Valens for the modern world. Definitely a record that will stick with me for 2016. –Kayla Greet (Arkam)

CLOSET FARIES, THE: *No Idea LP:* LP
This record was six years in the making. Sadly in that time, The Closet Fairies are no more. Originally, the plan was to release this on No Idea (hence the album name), and for whatever reason it got held up, but it thankfully got picked up as a joint release between Recess and Stupid Bag. The Closet Fairies have reigned in that lo-fi garage punk sound with blown-out, sloppy melodies. It harkens back to memories of basement shows with wild pits and cheap beer spraying from all angles. Most of the songs are around two minutes long, jam packed with snotty fury, which means twelve of the thirteen tracks all fit on the A side. My favorites are "Whale Tattoo" and "Wet Brain," which features some kazoo solos. Side B is a whole bunch of whining! It's a seemingly endless loop of "Wah, wah, wah, wah," with some droney tunes behind it. And I really love the album art. It makes me think of the classic record covers from Pinhead Gunpowder and Crimpshrine. Come back Closet Fairies! This rules! –Kayla Greet (Recess / Stupid Bag)

CLOSET FIENDS: Self-titled*: 7"*
So this is really, really terrible. But, at the same time, the singer is really trying to sound bad—both in the deliberately bad caterwaul singing way and the moral way, as in "look at how *baaad* I'm being." So that's not really much of a dig. You see, what you get here is spacebag folk, the exact same sort you'll hear crusties play on corners of every major city every summer before it gets cold and they go back to New Orleans. Spacebag folk is a true folk tradition orally handed down from crusty to crusty, like the dogs they don't want to take care of when they're done spanging and leave town. So why did Fat Wreck sign this up and will there be more? Because there's no shortage of conformist crusties hacking up lungs trying sound ugly while singing about drugs? Is Fat Mike the Alan Lomax of punk now? To be fair, Fiends do show some lyrical chops and she succeeds at what she's trying to do. So I ain't mad at 'em. That's a come up. I just wish I didn't have to be the one to listen to it. –Craven Rock (Fat Wreck)

COLOUR ME WEDNESDAY: *Anyone and Everyone:* *7"*
U.K. indie popsters Colour Me Wednesday's first release in two years finds it in fine form, with four tracks featuring two fizzy bangers bookended by a pair of slower songs. Although I do like a bit of melancholy, it's the middle tracks which stick with me more. They really have some great hooks and harmonies, despite lyrical content that sits at odds with the breezy delivery. In fact, it would be easy to pigeonhole the band as superficially poppy but nothing could be further from the truth. Over the past few years band members have displayed strong feminist, anti-capitalist, and DIY stances which are built into what they do and how they operate. I doubt they are to be taken lightly. In a perfect world, this is the group my daughters would grow up listening to—enjoying the music and absorbing the same positive mentality, leading to them feeling empowered and not allowing themselves to be held back by people or accepted convention. A very important band for many reasons. –Rich Cocksedge (Krod, krodrecords.com, krodrecords@gmail.com / Dovetown, colourmewednesday.bandcamp.com,colourmewednesday@gmail.com / Wiener, wienerrecords.org, wienerrecords@gmail.com)

COME 'N' GO, THE: *Tumbling Heights:* CD
Another oddity from Voodoo Rhythm here. This time it's a band that has the requisite garage sound drawing deeper and more arty, esoteric fare, like the fringes of the Velvet Underground's oeuvre and even early industrial music, for influence than the usual "I own the Kinks' greatest hits" type stuff. Their cover of Bad Brains' "Attitude" is more of a downright deconstruction than a cover. The kids who think Lords Of Altamont are the bee's knees will probably hate this, which earns this a thumbs-up. –Jimmy Alvarado (Voodoo Rhythm)

COUNTRY DARK: *Hypnic Jerk:* CD
It really makes me realize just how original and innovative the Cramps were when I hear a band try and fail to sound like them. –Mike Frame (Humu, humurecords.com)

CRAVATS, THE: *Jingo Bells:* *7"*
First new recording in thirty-one years by these Crass pals. The title track is an alternately dark, dissonant, and oddly catchy ode to the hyper-patriotism that currently appears to be infecting the larger nation-states. The flip, "Better House," is a swingin' ditty, maybe a bit more subdued than the feral fury of The Birthday Party but nonetheless blessed with some sharp teeth, lyrically and musically, of its own. A spot-on single all around and a fine welcome return to the fray. Limited to five hundred copies. –Jimmy Alvarado (Overground)

CRYBABY: *Drag Me Under:* LP
Crybaby, a trio from Philadelphia, plays stark emo with clear, confident vocals, hair-trigger guitar, and a dynamic rhythm section. I didn't think I would like this record (because there's been a glut of self-indulgent emo revival bands lately), but Crybaby's songwriting is heartfelt without being

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saccharine, dark without wallowing in gloom; there's a delicate balance here. The hooks are never repetitious and there aren't any eye-rolling one-liners that will be emblazoned on T-shirts or tattooed onto some dude's calf. Ultimately, *Drag Me Under* is a mature emo record that does more with less. Get it while you can because Square Of Opposition only pressed three hundred copies. –Sean Arenas (Square Of Opposition)

DAN SARTAIN: *Century Plaza:* CD
Picked this outta the pile purely because of the label it's on, which is run by a former member of Flux Of Pink Indians and has a history of releases quite varied in sounds. Dark, minimal synth is what you get here. It's at its best when things are kept slow—rumbling deep and almost cinematic—with things getting progressively grayer and less effective the further it strays from that formula. –Jimmy Alvarado (One Little Indian)

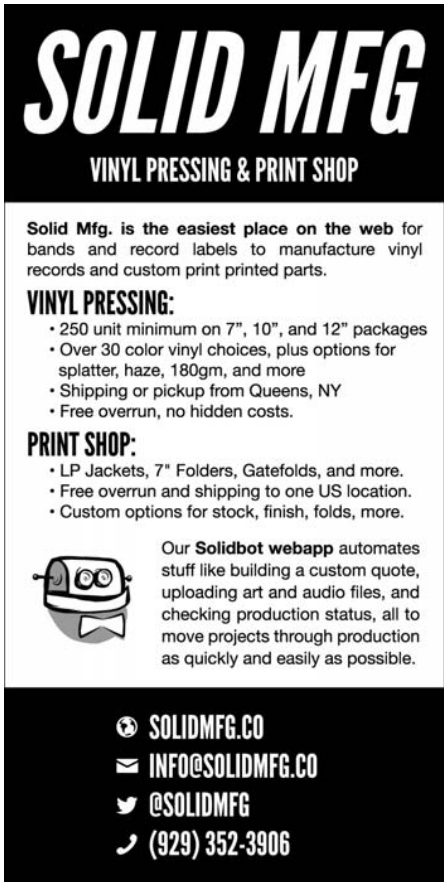
DANGER SIGNS: *Reset:* CD
People should be thankful for labels like Big Neck. These guys deserve a round of applause for digging up brand-spanking new bands—seemingly a lot of first releases. For a moment, it appeared the label was wrapping up shop, so it's nice to know that isn't the case. Getting on to the record at hand, if it wasn't already obvious, Danger Signs are great. The vocals are some solid, fuzzy, Reatard-esque worship (nothing wrong with that), while the music's quite slick and tight, with no shortage of well-coordinated guitar parts. Comparisons could be a more-serious Mean Jeans, with definite nods to sounds from the nineties (like Scared Of Chaka, for example). Big Neck led me to discover Baseball Furies and tons of other great bands over the last decade and a half, and it's great to see them still alive and kickin'. –Steve Adamyk (Big Neck)

DAVID ARVEDON: *The Best of David Arvedon:* LP
The falsetto juggernaut behind the Psychotics' 1967 non-smash "Till the Stroke of Dawn" (the second-best vampire song of all time, trailing only "A Bat Bit My Ass on the Way to the Drugstore"), the long-running David Arvedon must have surely sired Daniel Johnston, Jad Fair, D.J. Lebowitz, and John Trubee, presumably in a single night of wanton frolic with one or all of the Wiggin sisters, Polaroids of which would almost certainly break the internet and cause eBay to fatally rupture. What can I say about this legend that hasn't been uttered previously? Well, gazing at the album cover, I guess, "He sure looks blue" might suffice. Lyric of the album: "My bodyguards have shotguns / my lawyers all are hot ones." Look, he even invented rap! BEST SONG: "Till the Stroke of Dawn" BEST SONG TITLE: "When Your Name is Jalapos Pakedos." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: The catalog number of the original pressing of the "Till the Stroke of Dawn" single is 201,438. –Rev. Nørb (Mighty Mouth)

DAVID PEEL & DEATH: *King of Punk:* LP
David Peel is a veritable institution of the '60s music underground who sang odes to marijuana and the usual countercultural topics, as well as penning the anti-cop anthem, "Up Against the Wall," which included "motherfucker" months before the MC5's use of that word caused all hell to break loose. This is Peel's 1978 album, wherein he crowns himself sovereign of a scene he influenced. Here, in addition to the requisite songs extolling the virtues of the weed, you get sloppy, repetitive piss takes about murder, asshole cops, asshole punk stars, and an eleven-minute musing on the death of Rolling Stones founder and guitarist Brian Jones. Surprisingly, things turn out well more often than not, thanks in no small part to Peel's wicked sense of humor, which occasionally recalls Black Randy's finer moments. Will it wow the "Johnny Thunders is god" set? Probably not, but that's likely the very people he set out to piss off in the first place, which alone makes it more than worth the effort. An idol setting out to kill his prodigy: it rarely gets more punk than that. –Jimmy Alvarado (HoZac, hozacrecords.com)

DEAD WORDS: *Hey Rockers!:* CS
This is skate shoe, tattoo, teenage blues punk rock. The song structure, lyrical content, and attitude is nothing new to punk music or culture. Some people like their punk predictable. Others want to push the boundaries. Choose for yourself. –Jon Mule (Goof Troop)

DECENT CRIMINAL: Self-titled: CD
Sweet surfer Rosa, from Santa Rosa, California that is! Just like a decent criminal, this band is very hard to pin down at first. The drums are so simple and yet complex. They utilize the one, two, one, two tap pattern on the snare that I just love. The bass is rumbly and driving. The guitars are bright and jovial. Oh yeah! The vocal harmonies from these dudes make me think they've never in their lives had to shout over the waves crashing on the shore. Maybe they're more of a body board band, just getting their feet sandy before they jump into the crests with the real sharks. That's not meant to be a slight in any way; I actually really love the melodies and cadence of this band, possibly more so than a straight-up party surf band. They've got just enough grit in them to show their roots lay somewhere else. There are just enough Joyce Manor-isms to place them somewhere else musically. I almost hear a bit of Toys That Kill here too, especially in "Sore." Though it's not quite up that pop punk alley, it may be on the next street over. This record has a handful of acoustic tracks that help round out a softer tone, much like a piece of newly formed beach glass. Remember punk in the mid-'80s when bands actually tried to sing? The Descendents and Bad Brains come to mind. Well, groups like this are shifting the tide to the next level of actually giving a shit about the vocals. Prepare to piss off sound men and women across the world. –Kayla Greet (Endless Bummer / Dump Truck)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DEVIOUS ONES: *I'm Allergic to You:* 7"
Two slick and sugary, vaguely power poppy punk songs from a newer Detroit band. The songs are well-crafted and tongue-in-cheek with a bit of a *Killed By Death* vibe, but they're easily pegged as a modern band due to the guitar tone and vocal melodies. For the crowd that still likes their punk to have a dose of melody and a lack of anything serious, this is a good addition to your record collection. FFO: Dangerloves, Inversions, Dirt Cult Records. –Ian Wise (East Grand)

DIRT BIKE ANNIE / UNLOVABLES, THE: *Reunion Show:* Split: LP
I fucking *loved* Dirt Bike Annie! Well, I didn't LOVE, love them, but they were great! I mean, they weren't GREAT, great, but I loved them. I mean...well, *fuck it!* The point is moot! I am fuckin' *flattened* by their half of this reunion split album! These six songs ARE *great,* great! I DO *love,* love them! *Take me Annie, I'm yours! Do with me what you will!* This is the fuckin' songwriterly record of a lifetime for Dirt Bike Jeannie, fresh (or possibly stale, it might have been a while) off some manner of Transatlantic Heartbreak, or Transatlantic Dynamite (wait, that's Kaiser George), or something. Her thoughts and emotions and words and the music and all that other shit is all lined up, perfectly in phase, from start to finish. *The ducks are in a row! The shit is together! The revolution is upon us! Again!* How have these wizards made an openly nostalgic song like "1996" work (Packers 1996 Lombardi Trophy notwithstanding)? If anyone else attempted such a thing, I'd be of a mind to kick them in the slats! And "Worthwhile," are you kidding me? I was practically moved to tears by the line, "A love not meant to last is still a love worthwhile," and I'm generally not one to be moved by a bunch of Shakespeare shit. Record of a lifetime for DBJ, I say! I'd like to give some love to the Unlovables side, but that seems to run counter to their mission statement. I'll make a heart shape with my hands anyway. BEST SONG: Unlovables! "Chicka Wakka!" BEST SONG TITLE: Unlovables! "Ambitious Heart!" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Band erroneously indicates the "Miracle Braves" are the 1914 Boston Braves, when they really mean the 1957 Milwaukee Braves. –Rev. Nørb (Whoa Oh)

DIRTY LIMBS: *Blood Operator:* CS
Dirty Limbs' vocals almost take on a Fred Schneider-ian (B-52's) atonal and off-kilter tone. I didn't notice this in their latest split EP, which has me thinking that their sound is evolving. *Blood Operator* is an amalgamation of Thee Oh Sees and R.E.M. with ripping bass lines. Both guitar and vocals, which are repetitive at times, keep melodies simplistic and adds to their quirk. –Camylle Reynolds (Kerchow!)

DISGUSTI: *A Thousand Prickly Needles:* 7"
High-speed noise with lots of yelling and artsy guitar squeals that get old really fast. These guys probably burst so many blood vessels making these four songs. It's a shame they couldn't have made them not all sound the same. –MP Johnson (High Fashion Industries)

DJÄVULEN MÖBLERAR OM: Self-titled: CD
For being from Stockholm, these guys have a very Huntington Beach sound. I wouldn't be surprised if this CD came out on TKO Records or Hostage. The songs are mid-paced with a rock'n'roll edge to them. Just put Smogtown, The Drips, and Smut Peddlers in to a blender, top with off with Dutch vocals, make every song two minutes long, and you'll have a taste of where these guys are coming from. –Ryan Nichols (Beluga, info@belugarecords.com)

DOMESTICS, THE: *Brutal Regimes:* 7" EP
Another monster of a release from these cats. Mid-tempo, zippy, and terminally pissed off, they cover all bases and will peel the paint off the walls if you accidentally aim the speakers at the wall. If you're still listening to those old, worn out Discharge records and lamenting having missed some mythical era thirty-odd years back, believe me when I say you're seriously missing the fuck out. –Jimmy Alvarado (Kangaroo)

DYKE DRAMA: *Tender Resignation:* 12" EP
Are you a tender babe who spent hot summer afternoons stretched across the back seat of your mom's station wagon singing along to The Gin Blossoms years before cutting your teeth on bootleg Discharge CDs? If so, holy fuck, *Tender Resignation* was made for you. This is the first Dyke Drama release, totally written and performed by Sadie Switchblade, better known for her work as lead chanteuse of Olympia hardcore staple G.L.O.S.S. *Tender Resignation* has heavy bedroom-diary-come-to-life vibes. It shines in moments of glaring intimacy like the low-fi guitar and vocals anthem "Crying in a Bathroom Stall," which sounds like it was probably recorded in the middle of the night in her home bathroom. "Hardest Years," is a reflection on fucked-up adolescence driven by tambourine hits and hearty organ layers. Listening to this, I couldn't help but be reminded of Kathleen Hannah's 1997 Julie Ruin process. Switchblade's songs bridge pop punk and outlaw country aesthetics while keeping underlying feels of both candid reflection and rebellion. Especially recommend this for femme and queer punks processing the trappings of your twenties. The layout of this EP is damn cool, featuring photos of Switchblade that summon '60s pop country femme power and punk grit simultaneously. This record gets inside of you and doesn't let go. –Candace Hansen (Salinas)

EARL GREY: *Passing Time:* CD
Earl Grey hail from Mönchengladbach, Germany, have eight slick tracks of melodic hardcore here—almost metal

guitars and some emotive power-boy singing of the Victory Records variety. In particular, "Passing Time" and "Haven" are pitch-perfect songs about restless-hearted dudes just trying to figure it out—ya heard?—as the years slip by: "I've got my head in the clouds and my feet on the ground," shouts the singer. And well, I mean, *yeah*, same here, I guess. Same for my dog, too; she's just a pup but says that shit all the time. There's something about *Passing Time*'s immediate quality—perfect palm muting, shiny guitars with stop-on-the-dime-synchronization to (kind of distractingly) triggered drums—it couldn't be sharper. Maybe you like Early Grey, and polished, discernible hardcore is your jam; then you'll love *Passing Time,* but here's my problem. All that glossiness—kind of like the adjective "beautiful" itself—gave off the flash and the appearance of urgency without ever inviting me inside. Might I compare thee to 2009's *Avatar*? The EP costs 1,000 euros on Bandcamp, an interesting joke, and the CD I got from the band is not recognized by my CD player. Fool me once, Earl Grey! –Jim Joyce (KROD)

EGRETS ON ERGOT: *Serve Us Tender:* LP
Egrets On Ergot are one of a more recent crop of local (Los Angeles) bands taking the back roads of the city's underground, where shit is often grimy and a bit off. Their trip is a dark one, filled with comparatively loose song structures, tribal rhythms, muttered or barked vocals, and non-traditional guitar lines awash in reverb. It's a great entry by a band smart enough to know not to take all that post-punk dejection and drama too seriously or to strip it of all the rough, gristly bits. –Jimmy Alvarado (Records Ad Naseum)

EJECTOR SEATS, THE: *High Hopes, Low Expectations…:* LP
This is the third Ejector Seats LP that I've reviewed for *Razorcake*, and I'm loving it. They play a semi-novel mix of pop and garage, with a hint of early '80s hardcore thrown in for good measure. The packaging is glorious, including a gatefold sleeve. The Ejector Seats vocals got angrier over time, although there are moments of the calmer, gentler stylings from their early work. I had high hopes and *high* expectations for *High Hopes, Low Expectations*. The record didn't disappoint. Both fans of Ejector Seats and newcomers will love the grabby, energetic talent on display. –Art Ettinger (Collison Course)

ELECTRO INSIDES: Self-titled: 7"
Four tracks of tense, surprisingly heavy punk rock—tribal drumming, bleak vocals/lyrics, blown-out guitar. To quote the late, great Bruce Roehrs, "Fuck yes!" Reminds me a little of Kim Phuc, which is really a compliment, trust me. –Garrett Barnwell (Artificial Limbs)

EPIDEMIC: *Losing Control:* EP
Wasn't sure why decade-old recordings were finally seeing the light of day, but it seems that after the death of their guitarist Matt Frado the remaining members agreed to remix a few of the songs they had shelved. Killer UK82 vibes from Boston brings to mind Icons Of Filth or some of the more aggressive U.K. punk bands of that era. I would give a nod to Punkcore stuff, but this is way looser and more aggressive than most of the U.S. spiky punk. I'm not usually a fan of unearthing shit by bands not long gone, but this one is well worth your coins. Nice layout and cover, too. –Tim Brooks (Loud Punk)

ERA DEL VACIO: Self-titled: LP
Death rock outta Mexico, courtesy of Dave Rata and his merry band of cohorts responsible for bands like Ratas del Vaticano, Muerte, and so on. Flanged guitars and heavy reverb are the order of the day, naturally, with the songs themselves leaning more towards the punky spunkiness of early Christian Death, Part 1, and Burning Image than the cleaner goth sound that later became the standard. A glorious din, indeed. –Jimmy Alvarado (Cintas Pepe, via SPHC, sphc.bigcartel.com)

EUREKA CALIFORNIA: *Versus:* LP
Jake Ward and Marie A. Uhler are Eureka California. For a two-piece, Ward's fuzz guitar and Uhler's frenetic drumming fill up the space in my ears. Their sound time warps me to the '90s, to self-referential post-grunge pop rock. The snarky lyrics ("The American Dream can finally die with me / And my Liberal Arts diploma") evoke Harvey Danger and the clenched-fist choruses are lifted right out of *High/Low*-era Nada Surf. College-educated and disenchanted, *Versus* is at once familiar, fresh, and relatable. –Sean Arenas (HHBTM, hhbtm.com)

EVACUATE: *Blood Money:* LP
Vocalist from The Virus and Cheap Sex with a newer band, now on their third full-length. Solid, hardcore punk rock from the school of The Exploited, but modern and with lyrics tackling very current issues like illegal war, police abuse, health care, and privacy. Come to think of it, Wattie and company tackled these exact same issues thirty years ago. How sad that so little has changed. Solid message and killer execution. Ends with a perfect, amped-up cover of Chelsea's "Evacuate." –Chad Williams (Evacuate, evacuaterecords.com)

EVERETT BROS. MOVING CO.: *Moving Misfortune: CD*
This record sounds like the kind of lame, garden-variety alternative tripe that noodles around with various genres (a bit of bluegrass, a bit of hippy-dippy, a bit of rock, et cetera.) and sounds like it should be the main draw on "alternative night" in a college bar frequented by frat boys and other self-entitled higher-ed fucks. This record isn't *bad* in and of itself, but it's just so damn boring. There's no edge to any of it, and it sounds like the bands that played at the Bradford Beach Club (worst Milwaukee bar, ever) that I would go out of my way not to see. –The Lord Kveldulfr (75 Or Less)

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EXECUTORS: *All Against All:* LP
Raging hardcore punk borrowing equally from U.K. 82 and Nardcore. Lyrical themes are of the standard "punks vs. the rest of society" but provide excellent singalong material, if nothing else. Musically sharp and as arresting as Generacion Suicida while devastating as any Direct Control record. Perhaps destined to be a sleeper hit of a record, but not if you know what's good for you. –Juan Espinosa (Dead Beat, dead-beat-records.com)

EXPLOITED: *Horror Epics:* LP
When I was a nipper in the mid-'80s, the Exploited were seen as being clownish. I was too late for the first wave of '81/'82 punk and by the mid-'80s I was busy being surly with Crass, Conflict, and U.K. Hardcore. The Exploited were giant mohicans and bondage trousers, spitting and fighting, playing dumb songs about chaos and hating everyone. When I actually listened to them, I realized they fucking rip. From then on, I'm more inclined to throw on the Exploited than Crass. True story. This LP was their fourth and the last one of any relevance before they went metal and Wattie braided his mohawk. While this LP is nowhere near the genius of *Punks Not Dead* or *Troops of Tomorrow*, it is still a great listen, from the tribal drums of the first song to one of my personal faves—"Maggie" with the unforgettable, "Maggie… Maggie you cunt" chorus. Every punk should own at least one Exploited record (or many, like me). Get the other three first, but pick this one up too if you think you're punk enough. –Tim Brooks (PHR)

FACE TO FACE: *Protection:* CD
What's old is new, right? You've got to hand it to Fat Mike, along with every active veteran band on his label. They've really done a hell of a job after all these years of keeping their brand and their bands relevant. We're well past the "skate-punk revival" phase, so credit given when credit's due. *Protection* marks Face To Face's return to label after about twenty-five years, since the release of their debut (and much loved), *Don't Turn Away*. They are poised to return to their roots. Truthfully, it's been a long time since I've heard a new record of theirs. Scott Shiflett is still "the new guy" to me, and he's been in the band for twenty years. The last album I owned was likely their self-titled record from 1997 (which was around the last time I saw them live, as well), but I am aware they never deviated *too* much from their original sound. And, while credited as a band with the classic Fat Wreck drum beat, that really isn't the case, given most of the tunes had a unique, slightly-beyond-mid-tempo pace. I can't think of many other bands from that era that had the same set tempo. *Protection*, though, is likely the closest they've gotten to the sound they achieved on *Don't Turn Away* and *Big Choice*. While also largely credited to the incredible job done by the Blasting Room trifecta of Bill, Jason, and Andrew, we can acknowledge this isn't an easy task. The record starts out with "Bent But Not Broken" and doesn't let up—no ballads, no excessive ambience, and lots of "whoa oh's." I'm sure this release will entice those to dig a little deeper through the last couple of albums, myself included. –Steve Adamyk (Fat, fatwreck.com)

FEAR: *Neighbors:* 7"
From the vaults comes this three-song record featuring John Belushi on vocals. The 2015 remix starts things off with a crack and it ends with the original 1981 mix by Steve Cropper (yes-*that* Steve Cropper who recorded with Otis Redding). The Cropper mix features some dialogue from the movie. Sandwiched in between is the original Fear version. This will wet your whistle until more Fear reissues come down the pike. –Sean Koepenick (Atom Age Industries)

FLAME ON: *Corrupt Mind:* CD
Flame On's only vinyl release is close to my heart as it came out when I was sixteen. It blends with long summer nights with friends; not a care in the world when the U.K. punk scene was a small family of like-minded folk. To me, the songs still stand the test of time twenty-five years later, sounding very English, yet clearly influenced by the American bands… with touches of the Descendents, Embrace, and Articles Of Faith. This disc has the 7" and a pile of demos, which all sound pretty good. If this lot were a football (soccer) team, they would be second division, for sure. Of all the Boss Tuneage recent catalogue of history, this is probably the least mandatory. If you were there, it's worth the price of admission. I still think what Aston is doing—pulling together the history of a time—is admirable and I continue to look forward to each and every one. –Tim Brooks (Boss Tuneage,)

FOURS, THE: *Weekly Elbows:* LP
Quiet, understated, dreamy, frequently odd, lo-fi bedroom pop. Similar to Tom Grrrl if that dude really wanted to cop on the Beach Boys and turned down his distortion pedal. Would not be surprised at all if this was a one-man project. –Keith Rosson (World Of Birds)

FOX FUN / GROWING PAINS: Split: 7" EP
Fox Fun: Budget production power pop with some tasty hooks and a hint of flanger in the guitars. Growing Pains: Late-'70s indie-punk feel to the tunes, along the lines of bands like the Hates. Pretty good EP all 'round, I gotta say. –Jimmy Alvarado (Glad Fact)

FREEZE, THE: *Someone's Bleeding:* 7"
As we wait patiently for a new full length, this four-song single comes to keep the wolves at bay. Clif Hanger can still pen a catchy tune, and the band is solid from the first note. The title track is my favorite here. Re-mastered by Tom Lyle, so you now the sound is on target. Highly recommended. –Sean Koepenick (Dr. Strange, drstrange@drstrange.com)

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HARD LEFT
WE ARE HARD LEFT
FPR
HARD LEFT
side a
1. Economy
2. In A Crowd
FPR
Oakland Situationist punks Hard Left have a bold new single out now called "Economy." It contains four new songs, including two collaborations with London poet Tim Wells. Their stellar debut album "We Are Hard Left" is still available on LP/CD. Both are FREE downloads from Bandcamp, so take a chance and share the music.
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FRUSTRATIONS / GAZER: Split: 7" EP
Frustrations: Wow, it's been many a moon since I've heard anything from these kids. They still sound like they're mining tunes from punk's artier fringe to good effect, and even throw in some skronking sax for your listening pleasure. Good to hear something new from 'em. Gazer: These kids are also mining from punk's artier fringe, though they've definitely tapped into a much more aggressive—dare I say hardcore—vein. They alternate between pulverizing their instruments and quieter, unsettling interludes. Nice work. –Jimmy Alvarado (Glad Fact)

FUTURE IDIOTS: *Murphy's Law:* CD
I'm not familiar enough with the Murphy's Law catalog to know if they ever released a record entitled "Future Idiots," but this is Scandinavian Fat Wreck kinda music, where it sounds like they spent about four paychecks and a ruby on the drum sound alone, which sounds like a very well-miked basketball, which I can't stand. I hate to break it to ya, but if you think this is a cool drum sound, there ain't no "Future" component to the Idiocy, if you huff what the Rev is farting. Only two songs out of eleven are under three minutes in length; two also exceed four minutes. Again, if you think pop punk is constructed around creating three-and-a-half-minute songs, you are not only completely clueless about how the physics of your chosen socio-acoustic milieu operates, but you've also severely and repeatedly overestimated your ability to hold the listener's interest. I fuckin' hate records like this. However, you all seem like cool guys, so we should hang out some time. BEST SONG: "Stranglehold," although I admit I did not listen to it. BEST SONG TITLE: "This Isn't D&D," although it might as well be. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: My local record store won't buy any CDs that don't have UPC symbols, so I owe you guys a classy solid. –Rev. Nørb (Pacific Ridge)

GAUCHO: *Desplazados:* 7"
Members of S.H.I.T. playing distorted UK82-style punk with some anarcho influence. The songs are good but the recording seems sort of dried out. The guitar tone changes as the record progresses, and the B side has more *oomph* to it, which makes it more enjoyable. These guys are doing something similar what Rixe are doing but with a more lo-fi lean to it. –Ian Wise (Iron Lung)

GET BENT: *Discography:* LP
Having listened to Side A of this record in demo format for many years, I was stoked to see this band's discography being released. Careworn, thoughtful punk that merges the political and the personal in a way that comes off as earnest rather than cloying or demeaning. Jagged melodies akin to the inevitable—there's a heavy similarity to compatriots Latterman—but also the Insurgent, State Lottery, and RVIVR. The second side seems fuller, the songs busier and still really good, but also a little less nuanced, though maybe that's simply because I haven't been listening to those songs for years and years. This is a terrific band, and my only complaint is that no lyric sheet was included—these songs seem smart as hell and it would've been nice to finally peruse them in complete and printed form. Regardless, this one'll definitely spin frequently around here. –Keith Rosson (Dead Broke)

GIANT PEACH: *Tarantula:* LP
This is a bit like if J Mascis also played guitar for The Breeders but Kim Deal still sang. It's fuzzy, buzzed-out, '90s-style melodic punk that teeters on the indie rock distinction. Not really what I was expecting (here's a tip: if you don't know the band, it never is what you expect), but in a very positive way. Shoegaze/garage/dream pop stuff ends up finding me. It's not that I don't like it—The Jesus And Mary Chain is one of my favorite bands of all time. But I'm continuously weary that it's going to be too synth-heavy or pretentious art rock. There's always a risk involved with that cross section of genres, so I just stick to listening to *Psychocandy* more. Giant Peach found the right balance. It's bright, pretty, and dazing. Like if Lisa Frank's art had a soundtrack. –Kayla Greet (Shitty Present / Don Giovanni)

GLEAM GARDEN: *Singles 2006-2013:* CD
As the title suggests, this is a discography of singles by Japan's Gleam Garden, who, to these jaded ears, sound like Tiltwheel crash-landing in a late-'80s post-hardcore paradise. I can't help but make constant comparisons to Swiz and Soulside with this one—Gleam Garden's sound is raw and earnest, but there's sophistication and craftsmanship to these songs. When punk rock steps out of its insular three-chord 4/4-beat safe-zone, records like this result. Good stuff. –The Lord Kveldulfr (Snuffy Smiles)

GLITTER: *Ancient Rome:* LP
This record contains ten songs of primarily guitar based indie pop with deep-rooted '80s influences. I'm a big fan of many of the bands from the infamous '80s UK C86 Scene, and while Glitter seems like they likely draw influence from this era, I feel like there is something missing here preventing me from really making that link. The contemporary band Literature is a good comparison and reference point seeing as both bands seem like-minded, both are from Philadelphia, and both sound quite similar at times, but Literature really seem have a spring in their step and an upbeat demeanor that Glitter often seems to lack. –Mark Twistworthy (Square Of Opposition)

GO WHITE BRONCO:
***Population: Ghost Town:* LP**
This album is sublimely beautiful. There are few bands with the ability to be both uplifting and calming at the same time, but that's what Go White Bronco gives me. It brings about a state

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of tranquility as the acoustic guitars and vocal harmonies cleanse me from head to toe of the invisible detritus which I often find hanging onto me. The trio contains personnel from Iron Chic and Fellow Project—to name but a few—but this is so different from either of those two bands that it would probably cause some head scratching as to which genre it should come under in a record store. I would see it straddling indie and folk, and at times it really reminds me of a simpler version of the English band Gomez. I'm also pleased that the record includes the 2011 single "Life as a Monument" which is a stunning piece of songwriting. –Rich Cocksedge (86'd, 86drec.com)

GREAT LAKES: *Wild Vision:* LP
Great Lakes is a band led by Ben Crum, the Brooklyn, NY via Athens, GA based musician who has been assembling bands and releasing records under the Great Lakes moniker for the past twenty years. With the release of this, the fifth Great Lakes full length record, he and his band have made an album that really *feels* extremely personal even without really paying attention to lyrical content. *Wild Vision* is most definitely a rock record, albeit one peppered with strong country influences throughout often due to its excellent pedal steel guitar pushing that twangy feeling on nearly every song. Despite the mostly low-key country vibe, the record has some really strong classic rock guitar moments as well, at times bringing to mind some of the country tinged rock output of Neil Young. Honestly, when I put this on the turntable the first time, I was really skeptical that I would like it all the way through. By the time the second side ended, I could truly say without a doubt that I am a fan, so I turned it over and listened to it again. –Mark Twistworthy (Loose Trucks)

HIGH ANXIETY: *Camo:* LP
High Anxiety is for fans of Tom Waits, Harley Poe, Mischief Brew, campfire storytelling, salvage yards, homemade instruments, and sleeping out under the stars. I like punk and I like jazz, but I'm not sure if I like the recipe that produced this LP, even if I admire all the influences present. –Jon Mule (Bandwagon, bandwagonrecords.com)

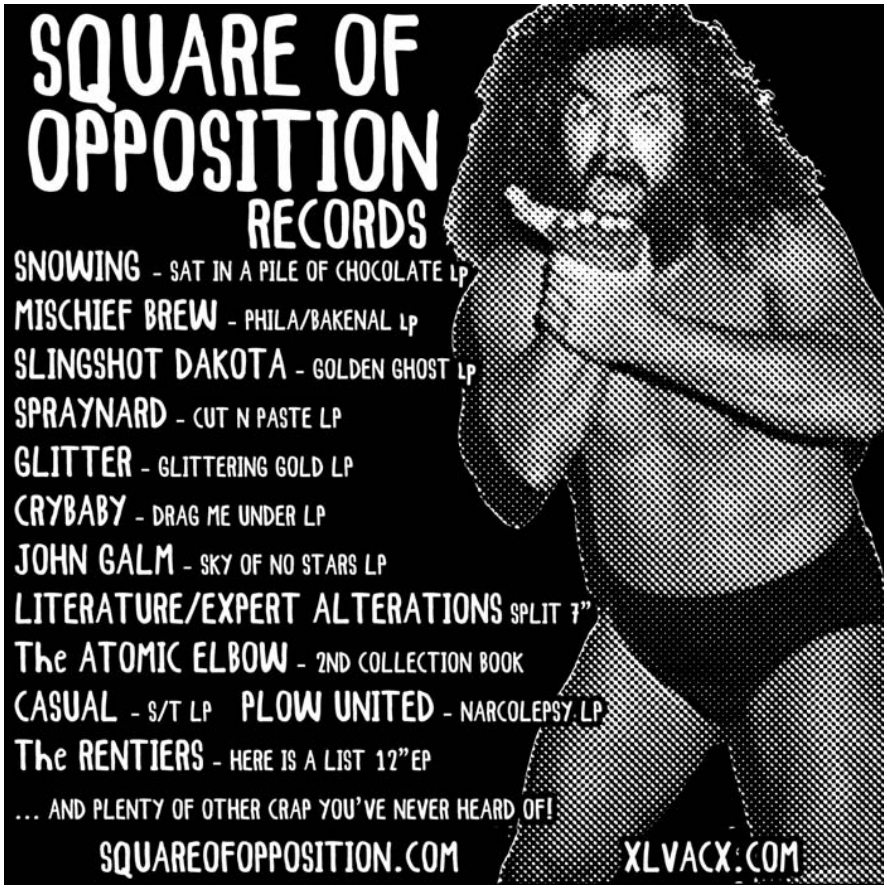
HIGH DIVE: *New Teeth:* LP
Although High Dive features Ryan Woods of Defiance, Ohio, it sounds more like Nana Grizol, with jangly guitars and pop orchestra ballads. Lead singer Toby Foster calls to mind Matt Tobey and Paul Baribeau—the type of plaintive singing that's instantly disarming. He belts deeply personal and relatable lyrics: "I've found that the best words to say are the ones where you don't say anything." Ginger Alford, of Good Luck, contributes backup vocals and sings lead on "Coffee and Ice Water" and "Untouched." She has one of my favorite voices—period. No song immediately grabbed me at first, but *New Teeth* sinks in slowly. After repeated listens, the lyrics began to tangle me up with their sincerity. The melodies, the keys, the harmonies all started to shimmer. It's a record that wants to keep you company. –Sean Arenas (Salinas, salinasrecords.com)

HORACE PINKER: *Recover:* 7"
Since 1991, Horace Pinker has been at it, and I hate to be a curmudgeon, but their brand of angsty melodic pop punk has been oft-repeated during the last twenty-five years. For diehards, *Recover* is a must-have, as it's been a while since Horace Pinker's last release. For everyone else, these three songs retread familiar pop punk tropes: anthemic choruses, simple guitar licks, gruff vocals. There's no new noise here. –Sean Arenas (Dead Broke)

HORRIBLE THINGS: *Everybody Else:* LP
This "group" out of Chicago does a great job of treading the line between pop punk and emo. I use the word "group" loosely as this really is a one man band. Tim Reynolds of Hospital Job not only wrote all the songs on this record but played every instrument, including back-up vocals to his own singing. On the first spin, *Everybody Else* was already an enjoyable record, but knowing now that this is essentially a one man band really elevates the production and songwriting for me. In the same way that a band like Jimmy Eat World delivers on both pop punk and emo sensibilities, Horrible Things come from both genres and merge into something altogether new. The guitar work is bright and fast, the drums are rapid-fire but not overbearing, and the bass is dirty and deep. It's a more mature bubblegum punk with introspective lyrics tinged with just a bit of snottiness, palm muted breakdowns, and Iron Chic-like background "whoa-ohs." A solid release overall. –Kayla Greet (Secret Pennies)

HOSPITAL JOB: *Never Get Cold:* LP
In the RVIVR song "Rainspell," Erica Freas sings about the dirt inside our heads. It's a metaphor for memory and the emotions that take root in that soil. Here in the foundation of Hospital Job, earworms are wriggling around and flourishing. It's like they built a farm directly under the band. These songs are super catchy. They glint around your ears—flirting, and threatening to take hold of the granulars, inject their saccharine syrup, and make mud pies out of all that dirt. It's posi-dance punk with enchanting melodies. The drums are clinky in a way that sounds like they come from a machine, but it helps to the raw sounds of this band. Lots of fuzz and distortion fill the musical crevices like a nourishing water. Vocally, there are two singers who weave together like vines on trellises and really exist well in a shared space. I've been meaning to check this band out for a while and am happy to cross it off my list. Real good stuff here. –Kayla Greet (Rad Girlfriend / It's Alive)

ILLS, THE: *Fuck This Planet:* 10"
Mid-paced, trashy punk paying homage to the Orphans or perhaps even Loli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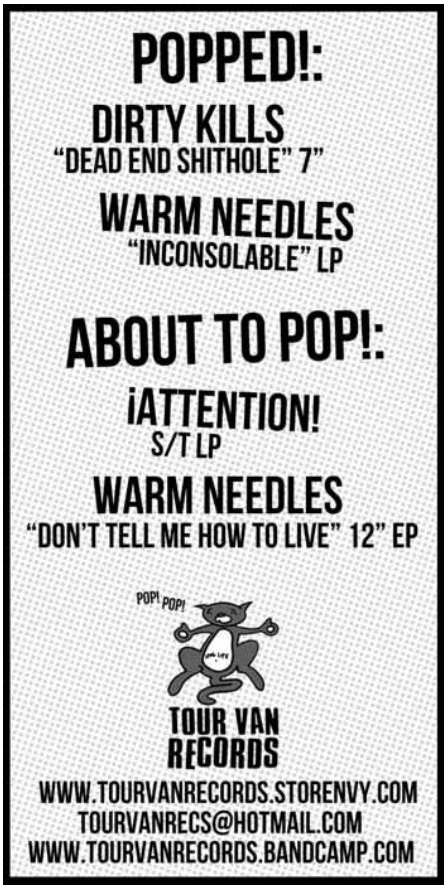


And The Chones. Co-ed vocalists sing about drinking, killing, being a loser, and not giving a fuck. I imagine every member of this band either wearing a leather jacket or very little else. Fun stuff. –Juan Espinosa (No Front Teeth)

INSURRECTION: *LTC 203:* 7"
Two songs from a band that called 1980s Arizona home. Both sound like they were listening to a lot of Code Of Honor and Flipper—slow (with one track breaking up the dirge with a burst of thrash), yet controlled in execution. Kinda bummed this—recorded in 1987 and released now—is apparently their only released material, 'cause it's pretty danged good. –Jimmy Alvarado (Slope)

IRON GUTS KELLY: *Bloody Kansas:* CD
Iron Guts Kelly from Lawrence, Kansas play heavily produced and polished tough-guy hardcore. They are the kind of tough guys who won't stop telling you how tough they are. I get it already! You could kick my ass. The cover art and album title make me want to think that this is some sort of concept record, but the concept itself escapes me. Is it about Bleeding Kansas, the bloody anti-slavery revolution that took place in the mid-1850s? Is it about war and violence in general? Whatever it is, it misses the mark for me. –Jon Mule (Violent Pacification)

J. GALLEGO: *Wash OST:* LP
Unsettling and paranoia-inducing synth recordings intended to be a soundtrack to a film named *Wash,* although internet searches for the actual film yield nothing. It's a little difficult to listen to something intended to have a visual counterpart and not have that reference available—like listening to the *Liquid Sky* or *A Clockwork Orange* soundtrack without having seen the film. Aurally, the tracks are masterfully crafted and evoke nightmarish visions of David Cronenberg's library of horror and science fiction films. The record insert art is a strange depiction of a high school prom photo with the head cut off and the track listing scrawled across. Fuck. Once I find out where or how to watch the film, I feel that this record will leave a much deeper impression on me. –Juan Espinosa (Iron Lung)

JACQUES COUSTEAU: *Frecuencia de Corte:* CS
Jacques Cousteau, from Mexico, is difficult to describe: one part jazz, one part Palatka, another part noise. Because most songs clock in around forty seconds, the entire cassette is roughly thirteen minutes long and a brief brain-scraping experience. The guitar and bass are spasmodic, the drums attempt to find rhythmic logic to the fits and starts, and the vocalist intermittently shrieks over the chaos. This is the soundtrack to a nightmare where I'm being chased. Lucky for me, I appreciate music that inspires hellish visions. –Sean Arenas (Etnospine Noise, ethospine.com / Mula Terca / Sin Retorno / Marginal)

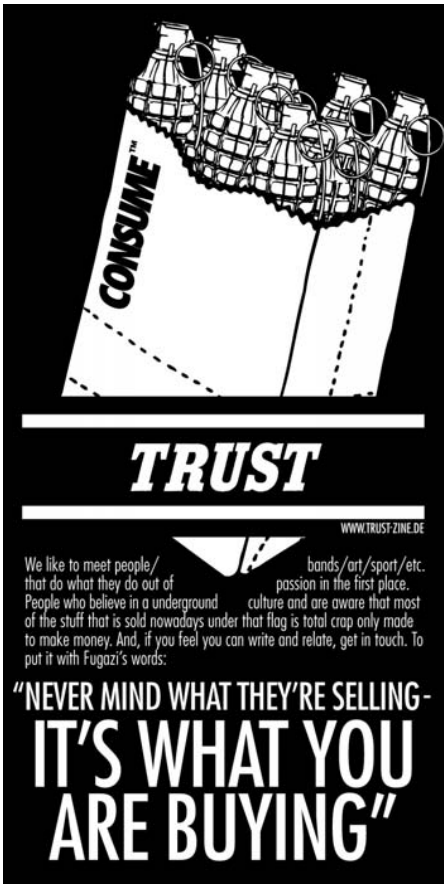
JEROMIL SABOR: *III:* LP
This is a curious-sounding record by a French band. My first impression of this band was that they have an Allah Las / Burger Records sound. The vocals are really bratty while sounding lost, the music has a garage jangle to it, and, overall, there is a hallway reverb effect to the songs. That was side A. Side B gets a little more experimental with vocal harmonizing, some risky tempo changes, and overall song structure. Personally I'm a bigger fan of the punk side A. –Ryan Nichols (Frantic City)

JOUST: *Sprouting Seeds:* 7"
A couple quick jaunts into garage rock land. The opening riff of the title track has me perplexed. Is that some Iron Maiden flavor I'm tasting? Is this NWOBHM-inspired garage punk? Is that a thing? Please let it be a thing. –MP Johnson (Fatal Seizure)

JOY SUBTRACTION: *Hate Will Keep Us Together:* LP
I was listening to this while doing the dishes and kind of getting into a whole self-loathing trip. The second song came on. I was pretty sure I was mishearing the lyrics as "I Feel Like Frank Stallone," which made me giggle. But I liked those lyrics, so that's how I sang along. As my fingers pruned up, I got to dreading the point at which I'd actually have to look at the record and find out what the song was really called. Probably something boring about "I Feel Like Being Alone." But then when I finished the dishes and lotioned up my hands and got the record all goopy, I discovered that was actually the title and I felt like these guys understood and I was going to be okay tonight. I read along to the rest of the lyrics about making a mate out of car parts in the garage and stuff like that. Lyrics that dealt with angst and disappointment in life with a weird and hopeful sense of fun, which is what I really needed. And the music matched perfectly. Kind of dark, but with lots of weird little sparkly flourishes. Complicated but not assholish-ly so, and thoughtful in a totally thoughtless way. –MP Johnson (Sailor)

JUMP THE BLINDS: *Kill Kill Bangkok:* CS
Some jittery ragers that might appeal to '90s underground freaks. When they go for more formal rock'n'roll structures, I lose interest. But every once in a while they hit on some Action Patrol/Jonathan Fire*Eater combo—nerd angst and slant rock and the right balance of love and contempt for the pop canon—and they seem larger than themselves. *That* I'm into. I hope they continue on the path of "93 Lumina," or even better, "Pest" (from their *Hooker Chemical* record, included in its entirety on side B). I kind of hope they change their name, too, but that's neither here nor there. –Matt Werts (Drug Party, drugparty.storenvy.com)

KILLER KANE BAND: Self-titled: 7"
This record was unexpected. Arthur "Killer" Kane put together a post-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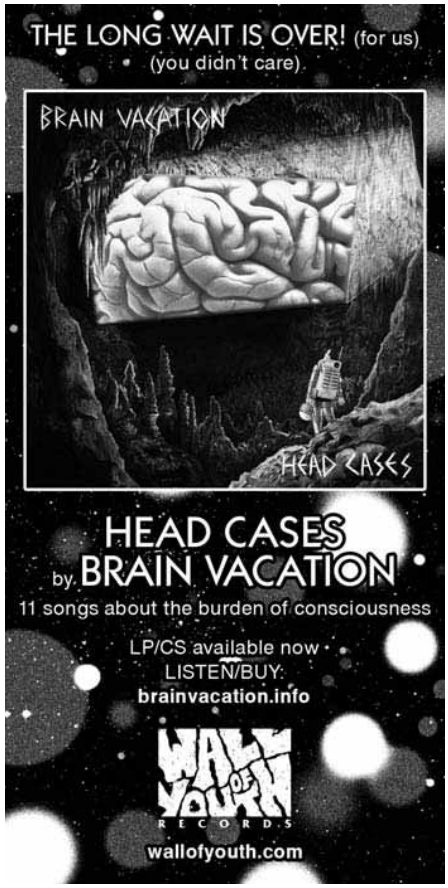

New York Dolls band featuring future W.A.S.P. frontman Blackie "Lawless" Goozeman on vox. The cover is a pic of Kane, looking skeletal and at death's door (he was probably still in his twenties when this pic was taken!). The music is kind of plodding, more in an average '70s rock kind of way. I get an early Alice Cooper vibe from these songs. The first time I played this record I played it at 45 RPMs on account of the big hole, but after about thirty seconds I realized it's a 33. Try it for the first song ("Mr. Cool,") it's pretty strange. –Sal Lucci (Hozac)

KOMMIE KILPATRICK: Self-titled: 7"EP
Dirty punks out of Detroit put eleven sick, '80s-style hardcore songs on this greasy 7". Sounds like a big "Fuck you." Plays like a Killed by Death comp. –Camylle Reynolds (Glad Fact)

LINCOLN TUNNEL, THE: *Today 2.0:* CD
No. Just… no. Okay, wait. Let's walk it back a little bit. Are you bummed that there are only so many Gin Blossoms and Third Eye Blind records in the world? This horseshit is for you then! There are some trumpets, there's a lot of whining, there's a lot of open mic night going on. Here's a lyric sample: "You live just like a yard sale / one weekend to the next." I couldn't even finish a song. It blows my mind that something like this would come to Razorcake, but I just learned that the Goo Goo Dolls had *two* albums on Metal Blade Records, so what the fuck do I know about the world? –Kayla Greet (75orless, 75orlessrecords.com)

LIQUID BREAKFAST: *Let It Be 77 Again:* EP
I thought we were done with shitty pixilated covers fifteen years ago! I guess Germany didn't get the message. It's a bummer because a record is the whole package; something to hold while the record spins. This is one of two appalling covers this month. Musically, it's mid-tempo power pop not unlike the Boys or maybe even wimpier like the Shoes. The vocals have a really strange falsetto quality, which I actually kinda like. I'll pass, though. –Tim Brooks (Still Unbeatable)

LONG GONE: *Six Songs:* CS
Can't move forward without toppling a few sacred cows, so bear with these names being thrown out there. Uncle Tupelo. Catherine Wheel. Jeffrey Lee Pierce. You're either incredibly intrigued or peanut butter and pickles disgusted. Long Gone is not my usual cup of indie rock, but there's a lot going on inside (and out) of this lovingly crafted cassette's songs. Intrigued by the mash up of all the other musical troupes inferred, Long Gone's cassette gets replayed for Ryan's vocals. Like the art insert, but would have loved a lyrics sheet. Recommended. –Matt Seward (Nervous Nelly)

LUCKY BOYS, THE: Self-titled: CDEP
As you might imagine, it could be an awkward situation when you are given a disc to review of a band that you are friends with. What do you say if you don't like it? Well, I will save that worry for another day because Seattle's Lucky Boys refuse to put me in that position. Having shared the stage with them on many an occasion, I knew they were an amazing band, but hearing their recorded output for the first time confirms it. They're a force to be reckoned with. Fast, rock'n'roll-tinged punk rock played well (these guys have played in a lot of killer bands over the years) and pushed over the top by Kim's stellar vocals. There is a reason I love going to Seattle any chance I get. The city is full of great people playing in great bands having a hell of a lot of fun. Lucky Boys are at the forefront of that for me. I'm going to have to scrounge up a copy of this on vinyl. –Ty Stranglehold (Lucky Boys)

MALASTARE: Self-titled: EP
Guadalajara's Malastare play grim, uncompromising hardcore like Moxiebeat and Mexico's Maladie. The vocals growl over the brooding guitars, and the pace ranges from driving to mid-tempo cacophony. This is my favorite kind of hardcore, where the rage is all-consuming and the noise is dense enough to chip your tooth. But they're not a bunch of somber dudes, as Malastare is the name of a planet in Star Wars and the home of the Dug species, I think. When you head to their Bandcamp, you'll be greeted by Chewbacca and the adorable gaze of an Ewok—the perfect accompaniment to crushing punk. –Sean Arenas (Ethospine Noise, ethospine.com / Puercords /Dias Mas Oscuros / Exabrupto)

McRAD: *Lion Pure:* 2 x LP
A killer, comprehensive reissue/compilation from this Philly skate punk band. We get a double LP containing the *Dominant Force* 12", the *Absence of Sanity* LP, and McRad's songs from a *Thrasher* comp. Very '80s-sounding, in the best way possible. Though East Coast-based, McRad would have fit right in with J.F.A. and Agression in Southern California. Of course, what makes McRad stand out is their incorporation of reggae a la Bad Brains, into their hardcore skate punk. That may sound like a lazy comparison, but come on, not many hardcore bands also played reggae. Oh, also, H.R. sings on a couple of songs! –Chad Williams (Not Like You)

MEERCAZ AND THE VISIONS: *Get Muzzled:* LP
While listening to this record, my brain and I got into a fight. Part of me thought, "Oh this sounds just like this one band…" and then I had to struggle to sort out what that was. Then it hit me that it was difficult to pin down because they're derivative of so many bands. There's a core Rolling Stones sound, especially with the vocalist who reminds me of a young Mick Jagger. But then the Stones are, in essence, a stripped-down blues-inspired rock and roll band. Meercaz And The Visions are the 2016 equivalent of that sound.

The lyrics are simple in a way that makes it easy to sing along with by the second spin. There are some real sweet Wipers-y guitar leads mixed in with fuzzed-out riffs and a driving rhythm section that round out a rockin' record. –Kayla Greet (Sweet Rot)

MINDLESS ATTACK: Self-titled: 7"
It's nice to see that I am not the only one who still likes The Pist twenty years later. These guys really love 'em and they are wearing it right on their sleeves. –Mike Frame (Mindless)

MINOTAURS, THE: *Secret Deals:* CS
The Minotaurs' debut album, *Secret Deals*, features eleven tracks of hazy garage rock. The production on its first handful of songs takes the genre quite literally, evoking a particularly tight garage practice pumped through ancient amps and surreptitiously recorded on an old 4-track Tascam. This approach shifts at the midway point with "Hangman," after which *Secret Deals*' remaining cuts seem to have been tracked in a particularly deep cavern or possibly a parallel dimension. There's a dusting of this space-y tendency throughout the entire release, but it shines most brightly on the appropriately haunting stunner, "Ghost." A generally experimental tone is apparent here—especially on the swinging "Little Man" and in the boisterous, ecstatic quality of "I Won't Compete"—which adds a welcome complexity beneath the record's omnipresent lo-fi hum. –Kelley O'Death (Rare Plant)

MISCALCULATIONS / NEON KNIVES: Split: 7" EP
Miscalculations: Seem to remember these cats being more in line with the Spits, and there is a certain level of thud-punk to the delivery, but there's also some wavy keyboards thrown in, with odd time signatures and a Mothersbaugh-esque quality to the vocals with pisses all over such trite dismissals. Me likey. Neon Knives: A bit more of a conventional "punk" sound, especially "Acid Eater," which is built on a driving, dark, and tasty riff. Then they go and fuck up such trite assumptions with their other contribution here, "Clorox," a bevy of stop/starts chopping up the forward momentum before it has a chance to send you careening off the walls. Great split here. –Jimmy Alvarado (No Front Teeth)

MISCHIEF BREW: *Bacchanal 'N' Philadelphia:* CD
Mischief Brew—the DIY anarcho punk brainchild of Erik Peterson—have remastered and reissued their eclectic resistance anthems from Peterson's 2003 *Bellingham & Philadelphia* split with Robert Blake and his *Bakenal* EP from the same year. Released together in the form of the compilation, *Bacchanal 'N' Philadelphia*, the eleven tracks include a crucial selection of acoustic singalongs, teachable stories, and vagabond odes from the olden days of Mischief Brew. For listeners who weren't in the know when the project sprung forth from Peterson's head sixteen years ago, *Bacchanal 'N' Philadelphia*'s rich, crystal clear remasters are the perfect gateway drug to discover some of the earlier entries in the band's catalog. While the LP is a must-have for serious fans and collectors, the CD art ain't too shabby either, featuring eight full-color, fold-out panels adorned with lyrics and brand new artwork. "Dare we say classic? Essential?" Peterson mused on Mischief Brew's blog. "Well, we just did…" –Kelley O'Death (Fistolo)

MODERN PROBLEMS: *Foolish Times:* LP
I am a total sucker for generic '88 youth crew straight edge. I'm pretty much as far from anyone you could call "nailed to the X," but fuck it, I dig the jams. On-the-fucking-nail hardcore from Buffalo with enormous gang backups and songs about having no regrets and foolish times. Sounds like a way sped-up Uniform Choice. It may seem like I'm clowning on this, but it's as good as it gets. I'm sure if you're down with this scene, you're all about this band. I know I am. Originality? Stick it up your ass. –Tim Brooks (Not Like You)

MONO IN STEREO: *Living for Yesterday:* CD
Mid-tempo rock'n'roll punk is something that needs to have something extra special to it in order to stand out from the crowd. If there isn't any spice in the recipe, the dish is going to suffer for it. I consider Riverboat Gamblers to be masters of the mid-tempo rocker and, fortunately, Mono In Stereo have a similar thing going on. Good riffs and heartfelt lyrics go a long way in the end. There are other elements going on here, too. I know it's a bit of a copout to list other bands that they sound like, but any time a band reminds me of The Outlets (Boston), I am going to shout it from the rooftops because that doesn't happen very often. I guess what I am saying about Mono In Stereo is that they don't sound exactly like some of my favorite bands, but rather like they're influenced by them. They also have a song named after legendary pro skater Monty Nolder, so you know they have to be rad! –Ty Stranglehold (Rum Bar, rumbarrecords.bandcamp.com)

MORALITY CRISIS: *Mash:* CD
Pick screams! Cookie monster hungry! Metallic hardcore with some occasional weird, *weird* group vocals that sound like operatic beer chants! Maybe Drowningman or Dillinger Escape Plan are good jumping off points? You know—bands that write fractured, disjointed songs that sound like a detailed exercise in attempting to map schizophrenia? I.E., these dudes are all over the place. The title track is over twenty minutes long, divided into four movements and the whole thing just seemed to drag for this particular listener, but fans of heavy shit should take note. –Keith Rosson (Minnesconsin)

MUNCIE GIRLS: *From Caplan to Belsize:* LP
In 2012 I saw Muncie Girls for the first time and, despite them being desperately nervous, it was obvious there was something special waiting

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Long-awaited third LP from this Detroit group. Blurs punk/noiserock/psych into a mass of anxious aggression.
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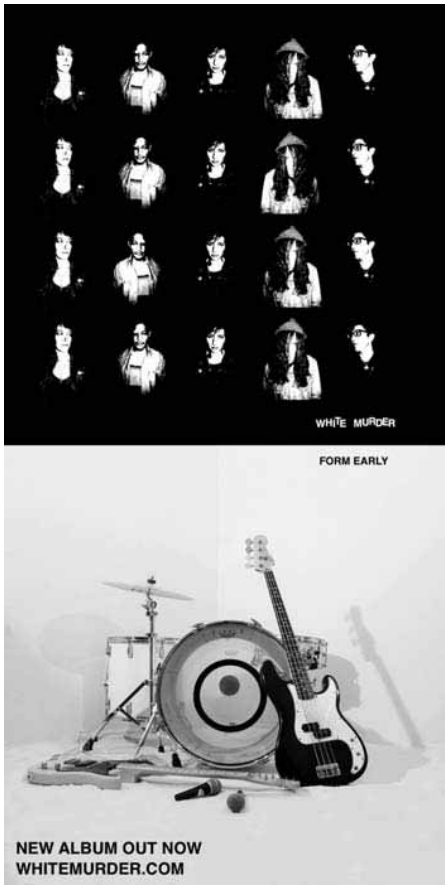


to come from the three teenagers. That year I saw the band six times and on each occasion there was definite progression as the Muncies gradually grew in confidence. In the intervening years there were a slew of excellent indie-punk singles. However, good things come to those that wait and *From Caplan to Belsize* is everything I could have wished for. All the trademark attributes of the trio hit new heights, individually and collectively, as Dean McMullen and Luke Ellis—guitar and drums—provide the more extravagant moments countered by Lande Hekt's lilting bass lines and mesmerizing vocals. If you do nothing else, seek out the video for the standout track, "Respect," which features a huge singalong chorus very much at odds with its strong anti-misogynistic message. Finally, I must acknowledge one gloriously incongruous moment in "I Don't Want to Talk about It" with its cry of "Oi oi!" which left me resembling a Cheshire Cat for longer than I care to say. An album destined to be played many, many times by me. –Rich Cocksedge (Specialist Subject)

NADZÓR: *Your Tolerance Is Shit If You Don't Try to Understand Us:* LP
Nadzor was a Polish hardcore band initially active in the '80s and, according to the liner notes, again active. This release consists of two demos, recorded in 1988 and '89, in their rehearsal space, released previously on cassette in Germany and Poland, and finally getting its first vinyl pressing here. The sound, captured by a mic placed in the middle of the room, is understandably raw, but one can largely suss out a band that mixes thrash with a tinge of metal and lyrically addresses much of the same topical material prevalent in the global scene back then—the constant threat of war, isolation, totalitarianism, and life within such an oppressive governmental state. Included is a booklet with tons of pics, lyrics, and info on the band presented in both Polish and English. A nice timepiece illustrating both punk's influence reaching deep into even the most repressed places and the human will to resist those who would strive to bring any dissent to heel. –Jimmy Alvarado (Pasazer, pasazer.pl)

NAMELESS FRAMES: Self-titled: LP
Tension. Nerves. Steady diet of coffee, cigs, and paranoia. With a beat you can almost dance to and a penchant for hooks cribbed straight out of the Burning Ambitions song book. Future Of The Left performing songs written by Paul Weller. Nameless Frames' mostly two-minute musical jaunts will haunt you auditory memory like the last band that blew your mind at Gonerfest. Get this record quick so you can tell everyone you were into them first. –Matt Seward (Super Secret)

NARCO ESTADO: Self-titled: 7" EP
A demo these Mexico City punkers released a while back is now seeing some vinyl time. They dish out mid-tempo, gruff-vocaled tunes that hint at more than a little of the "street punk" that has long influenced bands outta that area. Their lyrics address the sense of futility and existential struggles of being young in this "modern" world, spurned romantic interest, pining for long-lost friendships, feelings of isolation, and living under the repressive conditions of a "narcoestado." Fans of the work coming out of the Silenzio Statico collective here in Los will find much to whet their appetites. –Jimmy Alvarado (Going Underground)

NATO COLES AND THE BLUE DIAMOND BAND: *Promises to Deliver:* CD
I like this record, but I never know how to describe bands like this. They're punk (sort of), but not really. So maybe they're rock, but not in a meathead way, but that's not quite right either. And then slivers of country and rockabilly thread into some of the songs, and my efforts at pigeonholing them fall flat once again. Then I come up with a wonderfully banal description for bands like this: "twenty-first century alt-rock," which I immediately recognize as completely hackneyed. In the end, Nato Coles And The Blue Diamond Band play a brand of punk-derived rock'n'roll that is muscular yet nuanced, sincere, and emotive; kind of like when the hulking bad-ass lurking the shadows is into Keats and Shelley. –The Lord Kveldulfr (Rum Bar)

NEGATIVE SPACE: Self-titled: CS
Sick post-punk from Folkestone, England. A straight-up Protomartyr take on Mission Of Burma, with anxious-as-fuck, staccato Cold Circuits post-punk guitar. Vocals run from lax-spoken to screamy shouts with tempo change from song to song, keeping things fresh. Just let this one keep on flipping. –Camylle Reynolds (Grave Imprint)

NO USE FOR A NAME: *All the Best Songs:* LP
Here are twenty-eight songs on four sides of vinyl to cover No Use For A Name's twenty-five year career. You've heard these songs before. You know what to do. –Jon Mule (Fat Wreck Chords, fatwreck.com)

NOTHING OF MERIT: *Monolith:* 7"
Man, I am on the fence on this one. On one hand, this is totally raging skate punk with slightly unhinged vocals that veers into paddle-thrash territory at times, which is usually a wormhole to my heart. The problem is the record feels kind of half-baked and skeletal. This would be due to the lack of anything other than guitars, drums, and vocals in the mix (read: bass guitar). This just feels like a demo, or two dudes woodshedding. For me, that's a little hard to get past. Given all the gear companies thanked in the credits, I would have assumed that sourcing a bass and a spare recording track would have been elementary. –Garrett Barnwell (Reason For Resistance)

NVs, THE: *A Perfect Vision:* CD
The NVs are off-kilter punk rock from Washington D.C. Trashy and raw, yet

catchy and fun. I could imagine them on a bill with the likes of The Stitches, Big Eyes, or Piss Test. Damn, that is a show I would travel for. This might be one of those Razorcake reviewer moments where a band I have never heard of becomes one of my favorites very quickly. It happened with Neighborhood Brats and Rations. I could see it happening with The NVs. This is a hell of a disc. –Ty Stranglehold (The NVs, tnvdc.com)

ONE FOR APOCALYPSE: *Umbra:* LP
The beauty of instrumental music is that—in the absence of any lyrical content—I use it as a soundtrack to many different situations in my life, improving dreary chores or frequently travelled journeys by using the music to score such events in many different ways. The ebb and flow of the quiet/loud approach featured here allows me to create my own personal narrative to everyday life, one which changes on each listen even if the situations remain the same. Although there are only seven tracks, this album provides around forty minutes of hypnotic accompaniment which doesn't wear thin. Think part Envy, part Baroness, and then a smidge of Crazy Arm. Another fine release from this excellent Spanish label. –Rich Cocksedge (La Agonia De Vivir)

ONE SCYTH FITS ALL: *Original Short Film Soundtrack:* 7" EP
Spooky, weird horror film mood tunes. Greg Wilkinson of Earhammer Studios— known to record the crustiest/metal/hardcore/doompunk—has come up with this subtle, quirky delight. Turn down the lights, get lit (or not), and get weird. –Camylle Reynolds (Earhammer)

OUTTA SORTS, THE: Self-titled: 7"
The first two songs on side one are power pop-influenced garage rock that would please the Dirtnap Records crowd. With the first song on the second side, "I'm Feeling Very Difficult Today," they throw in an organ for a spooky, surfy tone without falling too far into psychobilly kitsch. Don't get me wrong—they're kitschy but in the way garage rock should be, not the guitar-is-shaped-like-a-bat sort of way. The last song shows the same amount of restraint with a more rockabilly number. It's a fun, unpretentious rock and roll record. –Craven Rock (Outta Sorts, theouttasorts@gmail.com)

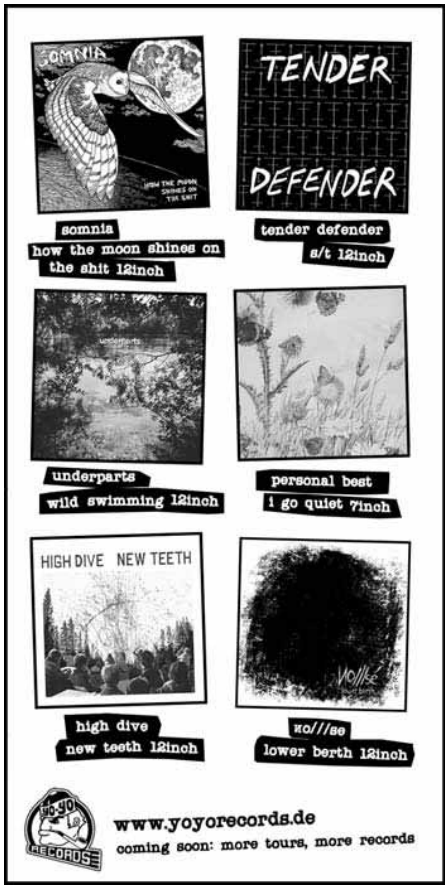
PARTY FLAG: *You Can't Handle the Truth:* CS
A distinctly Floridian theme permeates Fort Lauderdale punks Party Flag's image. From their logo—a fiery subversion of Disney's iconic castle—to the plump stripper pole dancing on one of their stickers, to the naked granny who graces the front of their *You Can't Handle the Truth* EP—I can't tell if she's a nudist or it's a porn still—the only thing missing is a gator and some NASCAR. Despite the band's apparently strong regional identity, these five tracks would seem at home in any place and any era. Their lyrics are funny in a harrowing way, teeming with the signature punk puerility, crassness, and nihilism that perfectly accompany the music's straightforward aggression and pervasive catchiness. Highlights include vocalist Justine Iukine menacingly slurring, "I don't care who stands beside me / You're the one I wanna fuck," on "Fermentation" and guitarist Jared Earl's joyously haphazard riffing on "Blue Skies, Black." Both of which will be stuck in my head for the next week. –Kelley O'Death (No Work)

PEDAL STRIKE: Self-titled: CD-R
Eleven songs of classic-sounding Los Angeles punk (much like the Dils) by way of Northeast L.A. These guys have been banging away all over town lately and, by the sound of it, are brimming with ideas and enthusiasm. Far from perfect but I see them only becoming sharper after hammering out the dents. Apparently, they're fun to see live so I'm making it my business to catch them sooner than later. –Juan Espinosa (Self-released, soundcloud.com/pedal-strike)

PERVERTS AGAIN: *Our Big Party:* LP
A couple months ago, I wrote a glowing review for the band Cruelster, comparing it to all our favorite '80s hardcore bands. Perverts Again advertises itself as being "From the kids who brought you Cruelster." I cannot figure out exactly what that means, but *Our Big Party* is another connection to the '80s punk scene, even if this one feels more like the Cramps or Violent Femmes than those previously mentioned. The songs are humorous and better for a night of driving down Hollywood Blvd. than getting your head kicked in by a horny football player in the pit. Extra points to the artist who created the perverted Milo-esque (as in the Descendents) logo for the album cover art. –Jon Mule (Noncommercial)

PETAL HEAD: *Raspberry Cough:* CS
Shoegaze is the new stoner rock, in that it's the new thing that punks start to play when they're getting older and want to branch out. Petal Head must be older punx, because they play lo-fi shoegaze that veers into stoner-y drone territory. It would be crushing with a harder rhythm section. The guitars are forefronted and most songs are as static-y, ambient, and underwater as My Bloody Valentine's most diffuse moments. When the songs pick up, the sighed vocals give the music an early Dinosaur Jr. feel. –Chris Terry (Dead Broke, deadbrokerecords.com)

PHYLUMS: *"Decisions" b/w "Vexed":* 7"
Reviewing records is a treat, but trust me when I say we have to wade through a ton of shit to find the golden nuggets. When it happens, it's always worth the effort. This record is exactly what a 7" should be: two songs, big hole, cool art. Everything about this record is great. The songs are well recorded, well



crafted, and make you keep flipping the fucker over. I can't decide which side is best, and you know what? I ain't gonna. I guess these cats have been in a bunch of other bands and that time and experience in the craft shows. These songs have been worked on, loved, created, and packaged into something more than landfill. This is a record I'll grab from the shelf over and over, a piece of art that is worth having in my house. It's cool punk rock with an almost rockabilly feel, hollow bodied guitars, stand-up drummer style, and the odd flourish on the keys. Bare bones. Shit doesn't have to be complex to work. Getting the recipe right is the key. I'm hearing Thee Mighty Caesars or the Headcoatees filtered though the Cramps and—the hell?—even the Meteors. It's current but reeks of history. I'd be hard pushed to pick a decade. Yesterday or thirty years ago? Who gives a fuck? This record is the reason for finding new shit to listen to. I'll be right back. Gotta just flip this over again. –Tim Brooks (Dusty Medical)

PRETTY HURTS: *Expectations:* 7" EP
Intriguing mix of borderline hardcore and aggressive post-punk here. Sound is taut, direct, and drenched in reverb, which makes things all the more clangorous. –Jimmy Alvarado (Grave Imprint)

PRIVATE ROOM: *Life Com:* 7" EP
Picking up where Walls left off, Seattle's Private Room give us a two-song teaser before a full length drops later this year. "Life Com" is a steady stream of blunt force trauma to your ear canals delivered in similar fashion to Walls but with a sharper focus on the effectiveness of brevity. "Gourmet Pez" is the B side and is a brutal cover of the almighty Man Is The Bastard. Speaking of brutality, Private Room's rendition gives the original a run for its money—or rather a disdain for the selfishness monetary wealth breeds. "All your money, will it buy you love? I say fuck your money! Give us gourmet pez!" This record is a one-time pressing of seven hundred copies, so act fast or you lose. –Juan Espinosa (Iron Lung)

PURPLE 7: *Garden Eyes:* LP
When you distill the laid-back Dinosaur Jr vibes of Landlord, the singalongs of Defiance, OH, the spontaneity of Hot New Mexicans, and the soulful bravado of Reigning Sound, what remains is Purple 7. Opener "Company" sets the tone: a head-bobbing beat, a striking bass line, infectious vocals, a warm Midwestern pop sensibility. Every subsequent song perfects the formula without repeating itself. "Hope So" blitzes like the Buzzcocks and "Mother to Be" trades distorted power chords for open acoustic guitar chords without sounding hackneyed. Closer "Have to Go" is a rollicking rock'n'roll gem with spiraling guitars and a big chorus with backing harmonies. From front to back, Purple 7's balance of swagger and vulnerability makes *Garden Eyes* punk pop perfection. –Sean Arenas (Salinas)

QUITMAN: *Demo 2:* CS
Quitman is two guys in NOLA who I guess knew each other from New York and have played in hardcore and pop punk bands. I don't really have a frame of reference for what exactly this sounds like and I sort of get the impression that these guys don't either. The whole thing sounds like each person wrote a couple songs and let the other one come in and mess around while they recorded them. It's got acoustic guitars, electric guitars, bass that always seems out of tune, super distorted vocals, and what sounds like maybe just a snare and a tom in the background. There's also a cool bass intro on one song with what sounds like tape manipulation but may just be a clever use of computer. I guess you could call this "outsider singer-songwriter" and it's definitely the sort of thing that isn't really punk but only exists because the people making it are punk. –Ian Wise (Subject, subject1.bandcamp.com)

RADIATION RISKS: Self-titled: CS
This is my third or fourth go at writing a review for a More Power Tapes product and they get me smiling every fucking time! More Power is a righteous and much-welcomed epidemic! The band in question, Radiation Risks, write and play fast, fun, funky, punky jams complete with other-worldly noise-chaos and a horn section. I love it when a cassette makes me want to see the band live, like I feel the high-octane energy coming from the studio and through my headphones. This cassette will be in my player for a little while longer. Keep 'em coming, MPT! –Jon Mule (More Power Tapes)

RADIO HEARTS: *Tell You:* 7" EP
Four tracks of puissant punk/power pop with a dash of rock'n'roll swagger thrown in for a bit of swing. "So Low" is the definite pick to click here, with hooks so sweet your teeth'll ache. Another genre that takes a bit of finessing these days to get something memorable past tomorrow, and this handles itself quite nicely. –Jimmy Alvarado (No Front Teeth)

RAW BLOW: *Slow Choke:* 7"
How many records in the Jade Tree back catalog do you own? I bet these guys have more than you and probably in every variant. Would it surprise you to learn that this is slick and tight emo that veers into hardcore and punk on occasion? They are pretty good at it, for what it's worth. –Mike Frame (Tor Johnson)

RED MASS: *EP Rouge N.2:* 12" EP
This is the fourth release I've heard from 'em—previously reviewed three 7" records—and each one has retained its own unique qualities from the others. This time 'round ye get a one-sided

12", complete with a nifty etching on the flip. The music is largely a mix of arty punk with some psych influences, with the infusion levels of either vacillating back and forth, usually with enough drive in the delivery to keep things punchy amidst the weirdness. Wasn't sure about 'em early on, but I gotta admit, I really fuggin' dig 'em. –Jimmy Alvarado (Slovenly)

RENTIERS, THE: *Black Metal Yoga: 7"*
I can't remember the last time I went from "What is this bullshit?" to "Holy fuck, I'm in love," so quickly. I looked at this record, read the title, and assumed it was going to be a joke. It isn't. I mean, there's humor here, for sure, but it's also a super chill, catchy tune that just makes me feel really positive about everything. The lyrics tie together the stories of several people finding black metal yoga and it saving them from whatever bullshit they happened to be entrenched in, with a chorus of, "Whatever gets you out of this terrible place, just grab it and let it lift you right into space." I think I'm going to do that with this record right now. –MP Johnson (Baldy Longhair)

ROOSTER JAKE: *Meta Metta:* CS
An "arsenal" of synths makes for slightly more driving Pure Moods-style artist's ode to basketball. Moog-y vibes and an almost coherent storyline via samples of NBA player Metta World Peace, I can't help but think about watching bike/skate videos, as Rooster Jake's art sound more like hip action soundtrack than *Jock Jams*. –Matt Seward (Basketball, burningthecassette@gmail.com)

ROVSVETT: *Russian Kommer:* EP
This classic Swedish hardcore band has been around for thirty years! Crazy. They're still mining the straight-ahead Discharge sound the Swedes are known for. It's fine, but doesn't break any boundaries. Most notable is the horrendous, pixilated cover which looks like it took ten minutes to throw together. The cover makes me think this is a throwaway release. If anyone gave a fuck, they would spend some time making something people want to own. –Tim Brooks (Just 4 Fun)

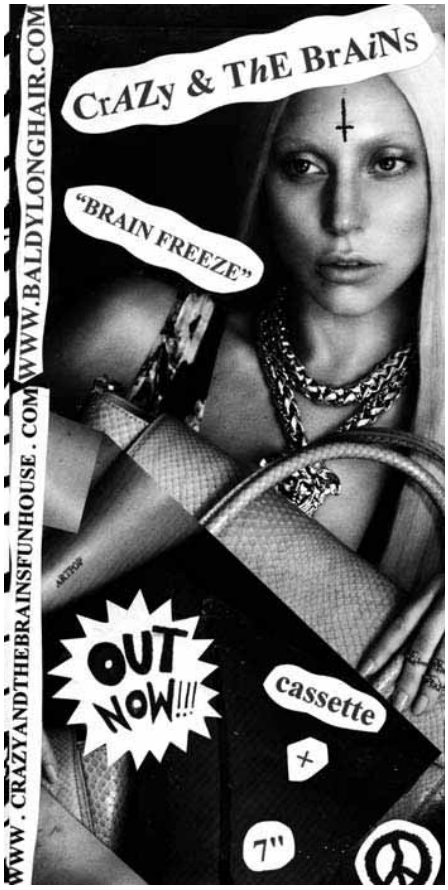
SA90: *Johnny on the Phone:* LP
A marked improvement sound-wise here from its predecessor, *Psychopathic Little Girl*. They're still mining a mix of bar punk and early '80s West Coast influences. They keep things melodic and never quite moving over into full-tilt hardcore territory, but they still attack the arrangements with a sort of meat and potatoes directness that feels more blue collar than, say, a buncha MIT grads slumming in the punk gutter. Nice updating the cover art on the *Rodney on the Roq Volume 2* comp. –Jimmy Alvarado (SA90)

SCRAPER: *Misery:* CD
Awesome, primitive, caveman punk rock from the school of The Spits. How embarrassing to discover that this great band is from my own city, San Francisco, and it took a Reno, Nevada record label sending a CD to a Los Angeles zine for me to discover them. Darker and more desperate than The Spits, which makes total sense given the dark times that we rock and rollers are going through just trying to "scrape" by in the most expensive city in the country. (Sidebar: Bring it on, San Andreas. Scare these fucking khaki shorts and flip-flop-wearing rich tech bros away!). *Misery* is a wonderful record from front to back, and a refreshing new entry into the great canon of San Francisco punk rock. Gonna have to check The List and see when these local biblical heroes (two of them are named Noah and Moses, after all) are playing next. –Chad Williams (Slovenly, slovenly.com)

SEGER LIBERATION ARMY: *Innervenus Eyes:* LP
The members of this band have logged some serious time in some of the best garage rock bands of the last twenty years, including The New Bomb Turks, The Dirtbombs, Bantam Rooster, and endless others. Therefore, it came as no surprise that this sounds like a record straight out of the late '90s garage rock scene. Not knowing anything about the band beforehand, the real surprise with this release came when I realized this group of primarily Detroit based musicians are in a band called Seger Liberation Army together, named as such because they only play early era Bob Seger covers. This vinyl only release collects all of the tracks that were on their previously released CD and the tracks from their two 7" singles of a couple years ago, plus six recently recorded tunes. While I'm not super familiar with early Bob Seger apart from "Ramblin' Gamblin' Man" and "0+2=?" (both of which are among the fourteen songs represented here), I was still able to dig this quite a bit. –Mark Twistworthy (Big Neck)

SERIOUS SAM BARRETT: *Sometimes You've Got to Lose:* LP
Serious Sam Barrett is your friend. A musician you can rely on. Write, record, tour. He does it with such regularity, as if his actions are dictated by the gravitational pull of the moon. Time after time he shows his dedication to DIY, punk, and making honest, heart-felt music. The music is acoustic, it's olde timey, and it's traditional country/folk music. It encapsulates simplicity while being technical and ambitious. And though I may never find myself listening to his records in the middle of the day, this music is made for early mornings and late nights. It can be both energizing and tranquil. It's reliable like that. –Daryl (YaDig?)

SINK ALASKA: *Battle Lines from Better Times:* CDEP
It's a crying shame that this Scottish quartet doesn't hail from Perth, as it slightly diminishes the alliterative impact of my summation of this release: well-produced, powerful, perky pop punk from Glasgow. Sink Alaska comes bearing gifts in the form of four



anthemic tunes which put me in mind of The Wildhearts and are as effective as downing a full Bonus Cup in order to get a big buzz before starting out for work. Top notch stuff with great cover art, too. –Rich Cocksedge (Make-That-A-Take)

SKIZZWHORES: *Insomnia Mania:* CD
Grungy political punk/hardcore, kinda reminiscent of what was coming out of the Bay Area and points north in the late '80s and early '90s—a potpourri of stylistic influences mix 'n' matched, angry, with not a lot of "pop" sensibilities hardwired into its DNA. The cleanliness of modern recording technology kinda zaps its effectiveness and edge a bit, but they sound sincere, which is often a rare commodity. –Jimmy Alvarado (Skizzwhores, facebook.com/getskizzd)

SLEEPASAURUS*: It's All Written Down and I Still Don't Feel Any Better:* LP
Imagine be-sweatered punks, sugar sweet hearts on sleeves but warrior's armor of East Bay bass coupled with machine gun snare and enough romantically charged angst to level their Long Island practice space and occasionally a basement full of their friends. Songs about girls peppered with Jughead-styled leads, Radon-intoned vocals, and enough hooks to fill a tackle box; it's a shame this platter is over ten years old and Sleepasaurus is long gone. It's fantastic Mike Dumps at Dead Broke rescued a batch of these from the trash and is spreading the gospel via their distro for a measly five bucks. Cheers to pop punk archeology! –Matt Seward (Creep)

SLINGSHOT DAKOTA:
***Their Dreams Are Dead, but Ours Is the Golden Ghost:* LP**
I picked up an earlier pressing of this record years ago because of the awesome screen-printed ghosts on the cover. I listened to it, dug it, and then pretty much forgot about it for some reason. (Slingshot Dakota seemed to do okay without me, judging by the fanfare their brand new album is receiving.) This is a reissue of that sophomore effort from this keyboard/drum duo. It's sweet and bright in the spirit of the last generation of keyboard-driven pop punk and emo bands, namely The Anniversary and The Get Up Kids. Of course, the difference here is that Slingshot Dakota really is just keys and drums, a combination that only works so well because Carly and Tom are so impeccably tight together. The sounds expand to fill the space they need to behind Carly's belting vocals—sometimes fuzzy and snarling, sometimes mellow and soft. The revamped artwork for this is as clean and elegant as the last pressing, which is a hell of an accomplishment in itself. –Indiana Laub (Square of Opposition)

SLOTHS, THE: *Back from the Grave:* CD
Fifty years after releasing an obscure 45, The Sloths decided to dust off their instruments and give it another go. While this disk is obviously indebted to the classic garage rock'n'roll scene that birthed the band, it doesn't reek of retro throwback bullshit. There's nothing dull or arthritic about it. It's still limber and energized, even cutting and angry at times. "Gotta Get Fired" is the sort of tune that really carries the most weight when played by dudes who have lived full lives of bullshit jobs. This disk kicks ass. –MP Johnson (Lolipop / Burger)

SNITCH A SNATCH: *Speed Birth: 7"* EP
Spazzed-out German thrash with a heavy stateside influence. Tunes are quick, angry, and bounce all over the place tempo-wise. Good, good stuff. –Jimmy Alvarado (Huge Major Label)

SNOWING: *That Time I Sat in a Pile of Chocolate: A Retrospective:* LP
As much space as emo bands take up in my life and record collection (a whole lot), Snowing never connected for me. Maybe it's John Galm's love-'em-or-hate-'em yelping vocals, I don't know. But I never liked American Football either, so you can take my opinion or leave it. Anyway, regardless of my dumb opinion, they were certainly one of the most beloved bands of the last near-decade of "emo revival," a phrase reviewers are contractually obliged to use in any paragraph that mentions Snowing. This is a cool little collection of all the non-LP tracks that they left behind with their much-lamented 2011 breakup. It's so convenient and nicely packaged that it actually makes me want to try again with this band. I gotta hand it to them; they really did have some of the catchiest melodies and bounciest energy of their many peers and imitators. The guitars are as twinkly as the vocals are strained and desperate. I have to assume that this record kind of has a built-in audience that doesn't need me to tell them this is a must-have for fans: there are song backstories in the liner notes, multiple recording versions for your comparing and contrasting pleasure, and some closing words from the band. It'll give you closure, if that's what you're looking for. –Indiana Laub (Square Of Opposition)

SOVIETTES, THE: *[Rarities]:* LP
As they state in their bio on the Fat Wreck website, The Soviettes are a four-piece comprised by three ladies and a member who "has a wang doodle." *[Rarities]* provides a glimpse of The Soviettes before they became one of the most proficient and gleeful melody machines in punk alongside Marked Men and Toys That Kill. The record is a collection of early EPs, splits, and unreleased demos for *LP III*. Even on their first EP, the guitars crack like a whip, the doo-wop harmonies induce a sugar high, and the urgent tempos are pogo accelerants. Although part of *[Rarities]* is odds and ends, such as an instrumental and the alternative acoustic intro for *LP III*, a collection of rare Soviettes songs is undeniably a good thing. –Sean Arenas (Dead Broke, deadbrokerekerds.com / Rad Girlfriend, radgirlfriendrecords.com)

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SPACE RAFT: *"Paper Airplanes" b/w "Iron Eagle": 7"*
I've dumpstered and freeboxed lots and lots of sixties and seventies rock and pop over the years. I kept the good stuff, but most of it's gone right back out the door because it's too clean, overproduced, soulless, and shitty. Layers of dust and scratches can't dirty up their corporate rock sheen. I'm not sure what these guys are going for but they sound exactly like those rejects. So if *you* actually kept all those records and spend a lot of time spinning Supertramp, ELO, and REO Speedwagon, well, this is probably right up your alley. In the words of Sam The Eagle, "You are all weirdos!" –Craven Rock (Dusty Medical, SpaceRaftMKE@gmail.com)

SPEEDLIGHTS, THE: Self-titled: CD
Woo hoo! Sophomore release from these dudes, but clearly someone here knows their way around the block, as the level of songwriting and confidence demonstrated in the performance just screams "veteran." Long story short, this is six tracks of damn near perfect pop which hints at many sub-flavors while still retaining a unique musical identity. Every song is so chock full of hooks I cannot recall a batch of songs this side of the Exploding Hearts that are more potent in this regard. I should also mention that fellow Dentonites (that's Denton, Texas) Jeff Burke and Mark Ryan recorded and mixed this, if that is of interest to you. –Garrett Barnwell (Self-released)

STRUTTER: Self-titled: 7" EP
Crazed hardcore from the streets of Austin, TX delivered in classic Midwest outsider fashion (United Mutation) but with an underlying Scandinavian vibe and unabashed use of an icy guitar tone. Four songs: short and sweet. Aside from their name there is basically nothing else to indicate that Strutter owe anything to KISS. Highly recommended for fans of the current St. Louis hardcore punk scene and anyone who misses Formaldehyde Junkies and Acid Reflux. –Juan Espinosa
(Beach Impediment)

SYNDROME 81: *Desert Urbain: 7"*
Some pretty sold mid-tempo hardcore with street punk overtones is what you get from this French band. It also sounds like good, fast hardcore with high-pitched vocals when played at 45, which I did for most of the first song. If you like rough and tumble gruff punk, you will wanna be all over this. –Mike Frame (Foreign Legion, foreignlegionrecords.tumblr.com)

TAPED FIST: *Grounded:* CD
Thoughtful and introspective this isn't… What it is, though, is twelve tracks of raging punk rock, Georgia-style. Comparisons to AntiSeen, Murder Junkies, or maybe even very early Nashville Pussy might be valid. With song titles like "Stink Finger" and "Bite My Dick Disco Boy" I think you probably know what you are getting here. –Garrett Barnwell (Mystery School)

TENEMENT: *Bruised Music: Singles 2006-2009:* CS
I wish I knew Tenement's secret. They write enough stellar music for two or three bands. (Their latest, *Predatory Headlights*, is a twenty-five song double album that took three years to complete!) *Bruised Music* is a collection of Tenement's earliest demos, and they sound so damn confident right out of the gate. There's isn't a single dull hook across these ten tunes. In fact, "Best and Worst of Times," "Sitcom Moms," and "Spaghetti Midwestern" still stand out as some of their best. Although the production is cleaner than *Napalm Dream* and *Predatory Headlights* as the drums are upfront and the vocals are crisp, singer/guitarist Amos Pitsch blankets the songs with his distinct feedback and audacious fuzz solos for the right amount of grit. It's incredible that Tenement can arrange an excellent full length from early recordings. That's a testament to their raw talent and proof that their albums will withstand the test of time. –Sean Arenas (Dead Broke)

THINGZ, THE: *Troubles Begin:* LP
Poppy, surf-inspired rock'n'roll. The Thingz hit on some of those classic rock tropes of the '60s. There are some dark, dingy guitar leads sprinkled throughout. Gang vocals (both male and female), when present, create an awesome party vibe. The drumming is almost giddy with how snappy it is, but it also comes right back down in some of the darker melodies and breakdowns. The bass is gruff and brooding, yet never overpowering. Songs are about serpent's teeth, trouble, shadows, and other nefarious topics—all the while keeping that garage sound. This is definitely the kind of band that would appear diegetically in a cult classic like *Blood Beach*, but, you know, before the troubles began. –Kayla Greet (Coffee Addict)

THIS LIFE: *Stories of the Year:* CD
I was intrigued to learn that melodic hardcore four piece This Life are from Toulouse, France, as French is a melodious language and hardcore vocals are… well, hardcore vocals. Boo-urns for me, because the lyrics on the *Stories of the Year* EP are in English, sung in an approximation of a non-regional dialect that lacks the enunciation required to fully comprehend each individual word. While the liner notes reveal the band's laudable philosophical and socially conscious messages, much is *literally* lost in translation. The vocals responsible for conveying the unfortunately minced words employ a serviceable hardcore delivery, though there's a hint of vocal strain that strips some power from their raw aggression. The third track, "New Anthem," pulls ahead of the pack with the addition of a catchy harmony, but the brief appearance of this dynamic element only makes its absence elsewhere on the record more conspicuous. Sonically, the EP falls easily in line with This Life's hardcore role models in Comeback Kid, Verse, and Defeater,

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Woven In "New City No Money" Tape
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The Elsinores "New Forms" LP
Sophomore LP from this bleak and nervy trio from Kentucky. Yields to early Cure, Merchandise, Chameleons, and Husker Du.

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and each of its six tracks is composed and performed competently enough to engage diehard fans of the genre, if not memorable enough to court pickier listeners. –Kelley O'Death (Delete Your Favorite Records, deleteyfr@gmail.com, deleteyourfavoriterecords.bandcamp.com / Never Trust An Asshole, nevertrustanASSO@gmail.com, nevertrustanasshole.jimdo.com / KROD, krodrecords@gmail.com, krodrecords.com / Fingers Out, fingersoutrecords.bigcartel.com)

THUNDERKROTCH: *All Systems:* LP
This is seriously offbeat rock music. When you don't know a band, you can't help but listen and be reminded of other bands, which gives you context. With this band, I'm not even reminded of a particular subgenre of rock, much less other bands. I'm sure they exist, just not in my world. Let's start with the fact that they're a two-piece. And if you were to guess at which of the three essential rock'n'roll instruments is absent, you'd be wrong. Just bass, drums, and vocals. Oddly compelling for someone (me) who generally appreciates traditional song structures, written with original twists and/or executed exceptionally well, over the, well, weird stuff. While I was certain I'd tire of this before side one was over, I was wrong. This is the good kind of weird, the kind that fools you into thinking that you've finally figured them out, then pulls a 180. Like in "Fuktitutionalized," just when you think you know where they're taking you, they launch into a straight, four-on-the-floor rock section, which, in any other band, is the most predictable part of the song, but not here. In any case, let's say you like early Turbonegro, bass guitar, Fugazi, b-movies set in space, Eagles Of Death Metal, and Roxy Music record covers; you'll want to check this out. I think. Probably. –Chad Williams (Thunderkrotch)

TV SLIME: Self-titled: 7" EP
The opener "Flying Fuck" is a quick bit of thrash 'n' bash. "TV" slows things down a bit, with two chords and an oddly catchy chorus chant… before thrashing shit up for the last twenty seconds. "Severed" is another mid-tempo, thumping brooder, which sees the band pumping in prodigious amounts of noise to the proceedings. –Jimmy Alvarado (TV Slime)

ULTRA: *Bay Area Babylon:* CS
Ultra is that underpriced tin of Aldi coffee; so good you need to know—were the beans handsome? How long has the bean tree been spillin' these goods? Is this a Pepsi? But no info appears on the can because Aldi doesn't care. It's Aldi. Get your cheap yum yums and your full body pillow on sale and get outta here. That's Ultra, too. All I know is they hail from Oakland, and track number three on the *Bay Area Babylon* cassette, "Perpetual Violence," starts with thrashy clatter and gives way to a rousing one-time chorus—"Architects in a game / puppeteers they got names"—that rinses away tough grime and yields catchy punk gold that Raygun would travel back in time to steal. What else to say? They've got a song about boozing in ancient Sumer, a song with a goofball hallelujah, too—"Take me to church / make it hurt." The singer sounds like an angry Pee Wee Herman in the best way. Tasty bass lines thwump around under all-business guitar. Too slurmy to be pop, too catchy to be hardcore. Who are you Ultra, my rock'n'roll mystery baby? I wanna get to *know* you. There are only a hundred of these cassette pups out there. Goin' get. –Jim Joyce (Self-released, livelifeultra@gmail.com, livelifeultra.bandcamp.com)

URBAN SAVAGE: Self-titled: 7"EP
Urban Savage is Swedish, but their punk is early, straightforward U.S. hardcore punk with gruff, tough guy gang vocals, overloaded with adrenaline and testosterone. Still though—from their band name to their song titles, cover art, and label—they are Scandinavian punks through and through. Not my shtick, but if it's Scandinavian punk you seek, heads up. –Camylle Reynolds (Foreign Legion, urbansavage.bandcamp)

VACATION: *Back to the Land:* 7"
Vacation's *Non-Person* is one of my favorite albums of 2015. On their latest 7", they provide one song done two ways. The A side version of "Back to the Land" is shrill and about as lo-fi as a song can get before it sounds like fingernails on a chalkboard. The B side version is more rollicking but with the same staticky production. I'm not sure that I prefer either version over the other; they're both non-essential for any Vacation fan. –Sean Arenas (Dead Broke)

VAMANOS:
***A Ten Inch at 45 RPMs:* 10" EP**
Garage guitar/drums two-piece rocking stoner grooves replete with hesher 'stache. Followers of nouveau '70s classic rock groove popular around the South (Jeff The Brotherhood, Bass Drum Of Death, Jawws) will find enough to latch on to in Vamanos, but the chorus of "Jackie O," the last of the six tracks, is the only thing I remember about the EP, even after repeated listens. Personally, I want something a bit more memorable (especially on such a promisingly named label). –Matt Seward (King Pizza)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Destroy All Art:* LP
I'll acknowledge right off that I got the second pressing of this here comp. I totally slept on the first press, being skeptical about comp-ing the '90s. Do you remember "ska punk?" Yeah. Then I dialed back my spazz-burst and remembered the good records I bought that decade, the great bands I saw, the great bands I passed on seeing (Teengenerate, why?) *Destroy All Art* is everything a comp of '90s punk should be. I haven't heard most of the bands, haven't even heard *of* three-quarters of them. Liner notes include band info, sleeve pics, and pressing stats. Now

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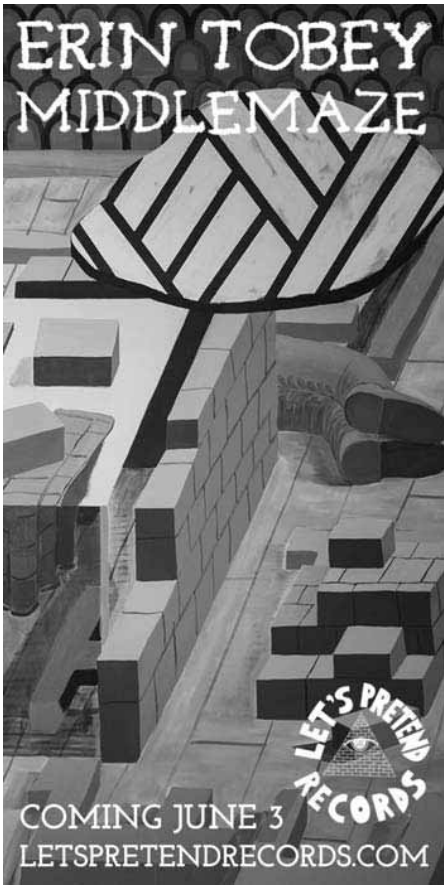


I'm in a memory rabbit hole of '90s record-buying records adventures... Buying the same records as your friends because you went to the same shows or the same stores together... How the tastes of the record store clerk really influenced what everyone bought (Alan from Flipside Records in Pompton Lakes, NJ, I'm thinking of you!)... Mail order being a dodgy affair (remember putting second and third choices on your list in case someone was out of stock? Remember mailing cash and actually expecting someone to send you a record?) There are no low points on *Destroy All Art*, but my high points are I'm Gonna Stab You's "The Slide," Epileptix's "Self-hate," (liners say this was a Timmy Vulgar band? Epileptix are one of the two bands I remember hearing back in the '90s) Last Sons Of Krypton's "Atom Bomb," (the other band I remember hearing back then) and Red Stars' "Welcome to the Party." I'm most surprised how good these songs sound. I certainly remember buying many records that sounded like the band's drum set was made of cardboard boxes. Pair this record up with the other recent comp of great '90s no-hits, *We're Loud*. –Sal Lucci (Rock N' Roll Parasite)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *The Dicks from Texas and Friends:* CD
Like most compilations, tribute records are dicey, and I'd venture to say even more so because the music of the original artist is often long ago ingrained in the psyches of so many fans. Most comps. likely end up in assorted landfills, to be found centuries later by intrepid diggers who will take one listen and not look fondly on this civilization. This here is an exception. A ton of different folks paying their respects to one to Texas' finest bands, some you likely know, some you don't—Brian Winterman, The Bulemics, The Surlys, Cunto!, Brewtality Incorporated, Black Irish Texas, The Beaumonts, Pocket Fishermen, The Gay Sportscasters, Poor Dumb Bastards, The Dickins, New Mystery Girl, El Pathos, Black Eyed Vermillion, The Fuckemos, The Flash Boys, Churchwood, Jesus Christ Superfly, The Jesus Lizard, Doug Hilsinger, Texas Terri & The Stiff Ones, The Offenders, Mike Watt & The Secondmen, Scorpio Rising, The Punkaroos, Pretty Mouth, and Garish—and many take the time and trouble to serve up their own interpretations rather than play it by the numbers. The further they stray from the originals, the better the results. Sure, there are some less than stellar entries (and no, I'm not gonna point 'em out, you damned troublemakers), but even those never despoil their own reputations or the Dicks. Nice to see that, like the tributees, this comp is a cut above the rest. –Jimmy Alvarado (The Dicks From Texas, thedicksfromtexas.com)

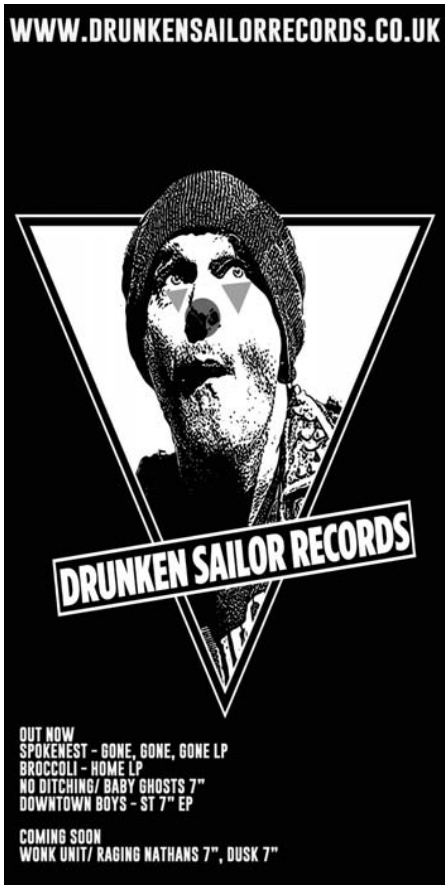
VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Under the Covers with Satan:* LP
Songs about the devil, sung with varying degrees of cheerfulness. The Decliners do Mötley Crüe, Perfect Monster does Coven, and Deity does Ministry. The other selections are a little bit out of my wheelhouse. There are some red hot coals spread out in this fire. If you worship Lucifer, grab your pitchfork and give this a spin. –Sean Koepenick (Volume Bomb)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Without Kibou There Is Nothing Volume Four: 7"* EP
Nice comp of hardcore goodness featuring tracks by Sick Monkeys, Active Minds, Slug, Rats As Big As Dogs, The Domestics, Violation, Dis-Tank, Pogo Assault, and Ziplock, respectively. One track each, no bullshit, no filler, no overt metal wanky-wanky, and definitely worth a listen. –Jimmy Alvarado (Kibou)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *World of Birds Records – Affordable Luxury:* CS
This is a compilation sampler cassette. There are four bands on it. They have two songs a piece. Each of these songs has a reverby, bright, jangly guitar thing going on. The vocals whisper by like vapors. Yaaaawn. I think I like the last song best, but I can't tell if that's because it's the indicator that the record is over. It's called "Wait in the Car." Though if I was, I might shut it off. From their website, the label says: "World of Birds Records is a boutique art production agency with our eyes and ears on what's next." Sometimes the bougie, pretentious, indie rockers' pants are so tight that they constrict blood flow to the brain. Affordable Luxury? Is that like "acceptable gentrification?" Stay the fuck out of my neighborhood. There should be plenty of copies to distribute at your cocaine art parties. Stick to that. –Kayla Greet (World Of Birds, worldofbirdsrecords.com)

VETERANS, THE: *Quartet: 7"*
"Rocket Summer" is a fun, catchy Ramones-style pop song. However, on with deeper scrutiny, I realized it gets into a relationship getting fucked by the false nature of our cyberspace reality: "Watch the human race float in the cyberspace / it's a nightmare on a soft bed / watch your point of view just become excuses for lost time, in a lost world." Just crawling out of a Youtube hole before writing this, I totally feel this guy's sentiment, wanting to shoot off into the sky in a rocket "for better times coming." There is some really nourishing stuff under the icing here. Even the artwork—the comic book illustration showing rockets shooting off around Easter Island statues—and we all know what happened there. The B side is "The Whole World Lost Its Head," a cover from the sadly overlooked, grown-ass woman era of The Go-Go's. A hard tune to fuck up in any right, but The Veterans pretty much match them. Now to get The Go-Go's to cover "Rocket Summer." –Craven Rock (It's Alive, itsaliverecords.com)

VOICE OF DOOM: *Scared to Death:* CDEP
Something raggedly charming about these guys. The boom-bap rock/punk hybrid thing they've got going on, the horror imagery, the dirt-simple riffs,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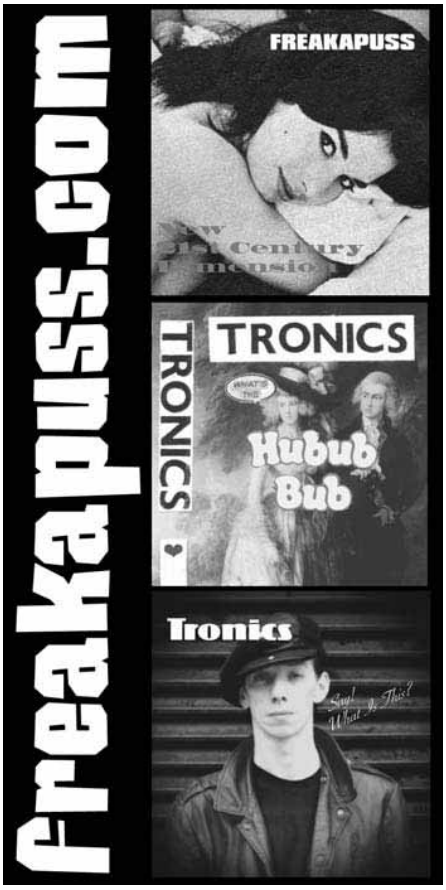

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the vocalist's croon that vacillates between Danzig and Reagan Youth's Dave Insurgent. It's pretty enjoyable, all told. CDEPs are a woefully unfortunate format, but these guys are clearly enjoying themselves, and that sense of fun shines through. –Keith Rosson (Pyrrhic Victory)

VON, THE: *Ei8ht:* CD
Sounds like the heavier stuff they used to play on the college rock stations in the late '80s, back when Faith No More and Wiseblood and the Cult were a thing. I do not miss the late '80s, back when Faith No More and Wiseblood and the Cult were a thing. "Cry of War" isn't terrible, but I think I speak for all Mr. T Experience/Rip Offs/Four Slicks fans when I say DEATH TO FALSE VONS!!! REPENT, you slick fucks! BEST SONG: "Cry of War." BEST SONG TITLE: "Atomic Sun." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: For promotional use only. –Rev. Nørb (Tinderbox)

WALTER DANIELS: *Almost Hit by a Truck:* 7"
The title track is a recounting of the titular tale accompanied by a '60s-sounding backing track, with minimal percussion and tremolo-laden guitar. The flip, "My Mind Got Bad," is a country blues ditty about a love gone wrong, naturally. –Jimmy Alvarado (Spacecase, spacecaserecords.com)

WARBOYS: *Hot Brass:* CD
Punk rock'n'roll a la Riffs, Radio Reelers, Humpers, Joneses, and Heartbreakers. Nothing new and nothing wrong with that. This seems to be their first effort, and it's a solid one. Every scene needs a band like this, and Charlotte, NC is lucky enough to have these boys. –Chad Williams (Mystery School)

WET ONES: Self-titled: LP
The Black Gladiator imprint of Slovenly Records have absolutely been on a roll lately, seemingly putting out all of the best of the scummiest garagey punk bands out there. They seem to be a fan of bands who have adopted the recording technique from the first Guitar Wolf record – everything turned up to 11, the EQ meters all peaking well into the red, often resulting in a ridiculously distorted but super great mess. This LP by Wet Ones record is no exception, adopting the super-loud and distorted technique on many songs, especially with the vocals. I hear The Spits influence in some of these songs at times, just enough to not be too much. Overall, this is exactly what I want in a skuzzy, garagey punk record. Great short songs with hooks, but ultimately so distorted and fucked up that you don't realize until the next day, when you can't get that chorus out of your head, that the songs are actually really, really catchy. –Mark Twistworthy (Black Gladiator / Slovenly, slovenly.com)

WHY+THE+WIRES: *Flame Failures:* LP
I'm going to say I think there's a good record in here somewhere, and that fans of mathy post-hardcore could get something out of this. Mostly, it feels like Why+The+Wires are stuck in the early '00s, fighting like a motherfucker not to be in any way contemporary. I want to play them Daryl Hall's "NYCNY" or something by The Hal Al Shedad and be like, "What if you did something like this?!" –Matt Werts (Jetsam Flotsam, jetsam-flotsam.com, One Percent Press, onepercentpress.bigcartel.com)

WITCHES WITH DICKS: *Not Just a Passing Season:* LP
Witches With Dicks is a lovable, longstanding Boston pop punk band with a strong resemblance to The Arrivals or Dillinger Four. It's a pleasure hearing these new tracks, all of which shine due to ideal production. The vocals have a nice edge to them, keeping the singalongs decidedly non-corny, which is no small feat. Even more so than with most other bands, hearing this release on vinyl demonstrates how much better a record sounds than a shitty download. Seek out this gem of an LP if you enjoy powerful, melodic punk. It's absolutely incredible. –Art Ettinger (Dead Broke / Self-released)

WITCHING WAVES: *Crystal Café:* LP
Was kinda thrown by the name a bit—figured it was gonna be some sorta death rock adventure—so I was pleasantly surprised when it turned out to be something else. Noise pop is the order of the day here, catchy and abrasive, sometimes sounding like a weird mix of Sonic Youth, the Wipers, and some obscure Crass-affiliated band. –Jimmy Alvarado (HHBTM)

WOOD CHICKENS: *Live At Karl's Castle:* CS
This here is a thirteen-song live cassette of the kinda thing that would have been on college radio in the late '80s. Kinda goofy with a bit of a cowpunk vibe to it. –Mike Frame (Rare Plant)

WRECKED LEXUS: *Produced by Joan Jett:* CS
Nice, raw, smackaround pop punk from some subterranean crud temple in Pittsburgh. I've heard quite a bit of pop punk that doesn't suck in the last few weeks. Are you feeling okay, pop punk? This shit is brawny. If they did a cover of that song "Totaled Volvo" by the Disturbed (the late '80s Rhode Island pop punk band, DUH), that would be awesome. If this wasn't on cassette, that would probably be awesome as well. BEST SONG: "Stupid Words." BEST SONG TITLE: "Rip This City." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: I dunno what the difference between "produced by" and "recorded by" is, but the J-card indicates this was recorded by Dave. –Rev. Nørb (Self-released, wreckedlexus.bandcamp.com)

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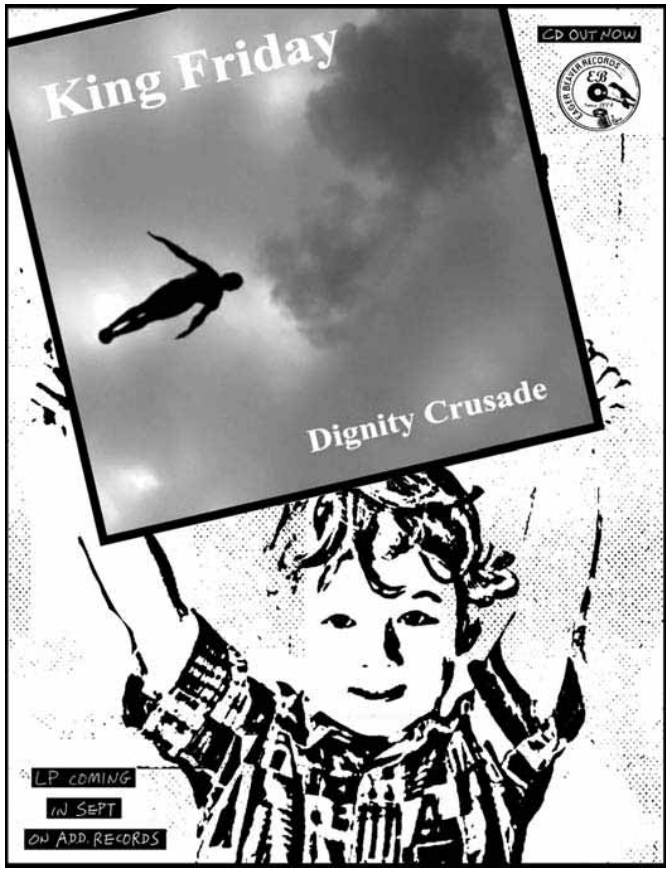

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• **Baldy Longhair**, PO Box 1853, Rahway, NJ 07065
• **Beach Impediment**, PO Box 26348, Richmond, VA 23260
• **Beluga**, Matrosbacken 104tr, 11767 Stockholm, Sweden
• **Big Neck**, 39877 Thomas Mill Rd., Leesburg, VA 20175
• **Black Gladiator/Slovenly**, PO Box 204, Reno, NV 89504
• **Bomb Pop**, PO Box 95008, Seattle, WA 98145
• **Break Up**, PO Box 15372, Columbus, OH 43215
• **Burger**, 645 S. State College Blvd. #A, Fullerton, CA 92831
• **Change-Links Community Calendar And News**, PO Box 34236, LA, CA 90034
• **Collision Course**, PO Box 865, Hermosa Beach, CA 90254
• **Contra**, Lüptitzer Strasse 39 / Building 38, 04808 Wurzen, Germany
• **Dead Beat**, PO Box 361392, Cleveland OH 44136
• **Dead Broke**, 129 Huber Ave., Holbrook, NY 11741
• **Dirt Cult**, 7930 NE Prescott St., Portland, OR 97218
• **Don Giovanni**, PO Box 628, Kingston, NJ 08528
• **Dr. Strange**, 7136 Amethyst Ave., Alta Loma, CA 91701
• **Dusty Medical**, PO Box 1981, Milwaukee, WI 53201
• **East Grand**, 213 Grand River Ave., East Lansing, MI 48823
• **Ethospine**, PO Box 1611, Riverside, CA 92501
• **Fat Wreck**, 2196 Palou Ave., SF, CA 94124
• **Firestarter / Toxic Pop**, 2619 Guilford Ave., Baltimore, MD 21218
• **Fistolo**, PO Box 2836, Upper Darby, PA 19082
• **Fringe**, 1021 Rifle Range Rd., Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464
• **Fucking**, 3036 Elliot Ave., MPLS, MN 55407
• **Glad Fact**, 237 Thuss Ave. Nashville, TN, 37211
• **Going Underground**, 1312 19th St., Bakersfield, CA 93301
• **Grave Imprint**, c/o Tilman Rexilius, Weidenweg 61, 10247 Berlin, Germany
• **Hex**, 201 Maple Ln., North Syracuse, NY 13212
• **HHBTM**, PO Box 742, Athens, GA 30603
• **High Fashion Industries**, 2048 N. Albany, Chicago, IL 60647
• **Hound Gawd!**, Kardinal-Galen-Straße 32, 47051 Duisburg, Deutschland
• **Huge Major Label**, 126 N. Franklin St., Madison, WI 53703
• **Humu** c/o Jaakko Ryynänen, Asemakatu 6b1 70100 Kuopio, Finland
• **Iron Lung**, PO Box 95521, Seattle, WA 98145
• **It's Alive**, 11411 Hewes St., Oakland, CA 92869
• **KROD**, 21 Chemin de la Pelude Apt. 245, 31400 Toulouse, France
• **Let's Pretend**, PO Box 1663, Bloomington, IN 47402
• **Mighty Mouth**, 313 President St. #2, Brooklyn, NY 11231
• **Minnesconsin**, 2105 25th Ave. S. #1, MPLS, MN 55406
• **Monster Zero**, c/o Kevin Stout, Rennweg 24, A-6020 Innsbruck, Austria
• **No Front Teeth**, PO Box 27070, London N2 ZP, England
• **No Idea**, PO Box 14636, Gainesville, FL 32604
• **Not Like You**, 102 Richmond Ave. SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106
• **One Little Indian**, 34 Trinity Crescent, London SW17 7AE, England
• **One Scythe Fits All**, 486 49th St. #D, Oakland, CA 94609
• **Phobiact**, PO Box 10 33, 1444033 Dortmund, Germany
• **Proud Parents**, 1315 E. Mifflin St., Madison, WI 53704
• **Pyrrhic Victory**, PO Box 412, Lyndhurst, NJ 07071
• **Reason For Resistance**, 701 Highland St., Houston, TX 77009
• **Recess**, PO Box 1666, San Pedro, CA 90733-1666
• **Records Ad Naseum**, 1443 N. Highland Ave., Hollywood, CA 90028
• **Red Scare**, PO Box 13285, Chicago, IL 60613
• **Rock N' Roll Parasite**, PO Box 11902, Bakersfield, CA 93389
• **Rooster Jake**, 2720 Adams St., Denver, CO 80205
• **Salinas**, PO Box 32257, Detroit, MI 48232
• **Scanner**, c/o Joseph Brady, 7026 Thomas Blvd., Pittsburgh, PA 15208
• **Secret Pennies**, 1015 NW 36th St., Corvallis, OR 97330
• **Six Weeks**, 123 Webster St., Petaluma, CA 94952
• **Slope**, 11430 N. Cave Creek Rd., Sunnyslope, AZ 85020
• **Specialist Subject**, 14 Gandy St., Exeter, Devon, United Kingdom, EX4 3LS
• **Speedlights**, The c/o Dwayne Ray, 201 Solar Way, Denton, TX 76207
• **Tinderbox Music**, 3148 Bryant Ave. S, MPLS, MN 55408
• **To Live A Lie**, c/o Will Butler, 2825 Van Dyke Ave., Raleigh, NC 27607-7021
• **Tor Johnson**, PO Box 1556, Providence, RI 02901-1556
• **Twisted Chords**, Reutweg 1a, 76327 Pfinztal, Germany
• **Twistworthy**, PO Box 4491, Austin TX, 78765
• **Voodoo Rhythm**, Wankdorffeldstrasse 92, 3014 Bern, Switzerland
• **World Of Birds**, 3970 Riveridge Rd., Cleveland, OH 44111
• **YaDig?**, 24 Mayville Ave., Hyde Park, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS6 1NQ, United Kingdom

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Interesting and unexpected to see Gwen Stefani and G.L.O.S.S. profiled in the same zine, I have to say.

–Indiana Laub
FEAR OF A FEMALE PLANET

AUSTERITY TIMES, THE #3, $?, 8½" x 11", copied, 8 pgs.
Basically, this is a just a short press release for an anarcho post-punk band named Austerity from Brighton in the U.K. Besides a few cryptic political pronouncements ("you can achieve delusional grief haircuts"), this manifesto-ish pamphlet mostly ends up pointing to some band contact links. While there is a list of musical influences at the back, I really wish their Bandcamp link worked so I could actually hear what these guys sound like. At least the Facebook worked well enough that I could eventually find that this was zine #3 and not just a press sheet that fell out of a CD-R. –Adrian Salas (Facebook.com/austeritypunk)

BROKEN PENCIL #70, $5.95, 8"x 10½", glossy bound, 64pgs.
Broken Pencil is a zine centered on zine culture and independent arts based in Canada. Can I just say that Canada deserves absolute props for the Canada Periodicals Fund and the Canada Council for the Arts that fund cool zines like this one? Light years ahead of the U.S. Issue #70 is chock-full of artists interviewing artists, a zine reviewing zines, book reviews, and music reviews. *Broken Pencil* lets artists shine with lushly printed excerpts, comics, and illustrations. There's a bitchin' feature, "Up the Disabled Punx" by Sidney Drmay, where "cripple punks" discuss ableism, accessibility issues at venues and the punk community in general, and self identification within their community as disabled. There's also a sick comic, "The Dream Is Over" by JB. Great zine for zines, with a femme touch. –Camylle Reynolds (Broken Pencil, PO Box 203, Station P, Toronto, Ontario M5S2S7, Canada, brokenpencil.com)

CHANGE LINKS, $?, 11" x 17", newsprint, 8 pgs.
A mostly community calendar (for December) paper with a handful of political articles and—the reason I'm assuming the publisher submitted it because of the handwritten note pointing it out—one lengthy show/bands review and interviews. Touching political bases with Liberate!, Death March, and Subhumans. Not the most gripping questions or answers, but a worthy attempt for the untethered ideologies found in the peace punk world. –Matt Seward (change-links.org)

CONFESSION BOX, $?, 5 ¼" x 8", clear-plastic/copied bound, 12pgs.
Artist Kayla Tange created this zine to complement her interactive, confessional performance piece that she originally performed at Rhabbitat in Los Angeles. She begins with an intimate narrative that confessions of shame, desire, and self-truths can create a connection between others and even oneself; ultimately setting people free. The zine opens to two pictures of Kayla in her "modern interactive confessional," dressed in white and blindfolded, sitting within a sterile, closed-pane glass box, while anonymous secrets and lies were written by participants. These pictures are a muted ethereal black and milky white covered by clear plastic pages with their confessions written in red font. The next picture is Kayla quietly scrawling each intimate, brutal, and sometimes loathsome confession in scarlet red onto the clear walls of her box. She states, "In doing this, the artist not only brings people together, but also allows the participants to become closer to their own truths." Beautiful little zine. Fifty printed. –Camylle Reynolds (Self-released, kaylatange.com)

DEEP FRIED ZINE MPLS #6, $1, 8½" x 11", 26 pgs.
One of the best meldings of punk rock and junk food since the Faction decided to go get Cokes and take up the "Fast Food Diet." This particular issue is the "arts and culture issue," so that includes a photo gallery of famous people eating hamburgers, a short survey of skateboard decks rocking junk food designs, and a very classy history of Del Taco and Taco Bell written in the style of Charles Dickens (titled "A Tale of Two Tacos," naturally). There are a couple fast food-centered interviews with the bands togetherPangea and Cherry Cola about their fast food preferences on the road but, personally, the zenith of this zine's musical dalliances is the re-written lyrics to Drake's "Hotline Bling" called "Deep Fried Bling." Just try not to replace the lyrics the next time it comes on in the in the grocery store or mall with this extra greasy version. –Adrian Salas (Deep Fried Zine MPLS, 2901 Yosemite Ave S., St. Louis Park, MN 55416, videophobia222@hotmail.com)

DITHERING DOODLES #25, $1, 5½" x 8½", copied, 60 pgs.
Dithering Doodles #25 is all about daydreams, night dreams, and the new Star Wars movie. Starting off Christmas day, this comic zine takes us through his thoughts on the new Star Wars, how his new job is going, and some recent interesting dreams he's had. I really enjoyed the goofy drawings of Star Wars characters. Also mentioned is that it was the author's birthday (happy belated birthday!) recently, his thoughts on getting old, and how he hopes to keep making this silly comic zine till the end. You're doing great so far, dude. –Tricia Ramos (Dithering Doodles, 259 E 200 St., SLC, UT, 84111, premiumdeluxe@hotmail.com)

EXSCIND, $?, 5 ½" x 8½", color copied, 34 pgs.
Articles, poetry, and color photos from 2010 to 2015 are what comprise the content of *Exscind.* There's a wide range of material here, including articles on finding dead bodies as a pest control worker, living in silence, and Puritan religious woman, Anne Hutchinson. There's quite a wide array of topics, and the photographs also run the gamut. Thankfully, Adel chose to go with color photos and glossy paper, which really makes the images (and zine) pop. Not everything is fantastic in *Exscind.* Some pieces were too short or just didn't hit the mark. But for the ones that did work (particularly the ones that dealt with death), they hit hard. Adel has the capability to be a strong writer. The material wasn't entirely consistent, but for the sake of the strong pieces and the photographs, this is worth picking up. –Kurt Morris (adelsouto@adelsouto.com)

FEAR OF A FEMALE PLANET, $2, 5½" x 8½", copied, 12 pgs.
A Pokédex-style rundown of a handful of female and feminist musicians from the late '70s to the present day. Not a lot of information beyond the basic stats: hometown, genre, maybe a little one- or two-sentence blurb, and some cut-and-paste copied photos. I'm totally on board with the sentiment behind it, and maybe some young kid will find this left in a newspaper rack or a coffee shop somewhere and benefit from the survey-course style of this thing. So if that's the case, then awesome. But it's really just a surface-level mention of each artist, so I don't know if this is something that would hold the interest of anyone who's already fairly familiar with this kind of music. Interesting and unexpected to see Gwen Stefani and G.L.O.S.S. profiled in the same zine, I have to say. –Indiana Laub (No address listed)

GENERAL ADMISSION MUTT #2, $2, 8½" x 11", copied, 22 pgs.
This is less of a traditional punk zine than a curated collection of shining moments: a classified ad for R.L. Stine's dream journal, a poorly translated Spanish essay about a day in the life of Conan O'Brien, a coupon that excuses me from apologizing for something, and a lengthy email from "Dave Grohl" that features the line, "I'm glad you asked about the documentary 'cause the one location we didn't get to do an episode of *Sonic Highways* was Somalia." Despite the impression I may be giving, GAM #2 actually doesn't suffer from that scatterbrained feeling that so many similarly "random" zines have—somehow the editor's sense of humor and occasional moments of unexpected candor tie it all together into something that feels like a tangent-riddled but legitimately hilarious conversation with some thoughtful punk weirdo. There's also a review section that abruptly drops the post-ironic thing and offers some sincere, well-developed insight on recent releases by Beach Slang, Pleasure Leftists, and Night Birds. Didn't see that one coming, huh? These are immediately followed by "a transcription of a totally real call made to NPR's syndicated talk radio program 'Car Talk,' presented in Comic Sans." As with any respectable publication, increasingly bitter social media statuses from a not-quite-alternate reality Greg Ginn are sprinkled throughout. –Indiana Laub (General Admission Mutt, PO Box 9, NY, NY 10034, gamutt.storenvy.com)

GOODBYE, OR THE STATE OF NATURE: A COMIK,
$6, 4" x 5 ½", offset with cardstock cover, 88 pgs.
Goodbye begins by parodying a myth from Plato's *The Symposium*. It's the one where humans originally had four arms and legs and two faces. Zeus, in his infinite wisdom, feared man's power so he split them in half. And, lo and behold, we all now must seek out our other half so as to feel complete. That's love, folks. But then the scene ends with a character stating, "No, that doesn't make me feel better about group sex," revealing Passmore's incisive sense of humor. Passmore explores loneliness and inner turmoil through wavy black lines that resemble Brandon Graham's art. There's a beauty to the simplistic narrative, but I couldn't tell you what *Goodbye* is *really* about because its ambiguity is what draws you in; it's what has made me reread it three or four times. Maybe it's a political piece (it does end with a circle A comprised of people kissin' and cuddlin'). Or it's deeply personal: an allegory about death and caving in to societal expectations. In the end, what matters is what you make of it, and Passmore provides a lot of food for thought. –Sean Arenas (Silver Sprocket Bicycle Club, 1057 Valencia St., SF, CA 94110, silversprocket.net)

I WANT YOU AROUND, $?, 5½" x 8½", color copied, 42 pgs.
I Want You Around is a short but engaging zine compiled of color photos by Abby Banks. Abby's done a lot of traveling and touring with bands over the course of ten years. These photos include shots of nature and bands, but mainly pictures of friends and other random people. I'm so glad she made this color, as it makes the scenes more vibrant and real. These photos could easily be mounted and placed in a photography show, pondered, and reflected upon. They're full of energy and contain scenes from all over the United States (and some abroad). The photos show people really living—excited and in the moment. That's not to say that this zine changed my life or moved me spiritually, but of the many photo zines I've reviewed over the years this is certainly the best. –Kurt Morris (abbybanksisalive@gmail.com)

The gospel zine truth: "paying full price for copies is the real crime and no zine maker should ever do it!"
–Jim Joyce | SEVEN INCHES TO FREEDOM #13

LAST 4th AT POWDERHORN, THE, $3, 4¾" x 7 ⅞", color printed paper, 20 pgs.
This zine is "a participant's account" by Karl Noyes of going to see the final fireworks at the Powderhorn Park Fourth of July celebration that occurred in 2013. The writer and a couple of friends ride bikes to the park, take some mushrooms, see disappointing fireworks, set off their own fireworks, and idly reflect on life some more. In short, not that much really happens. There is a lot of complaining about the "nanny mentality," though. The glossy collage work that's all over the cover and margins is pretty great. It oddly manages to illustrate the stories pretty well in a Dada-esque way. Extra bonus points for the weird, pop-culture nightmare John Wayne and pizza centerfold. –Adrian Salas (Roosterhouse, 3052 Elliot Ave., MPLS, MN 55407, roosterhouse.org/zineia.com)

LES CARNETS DE RASTAPOPOULOS #11, $?, 8½" x 5½", copied, 16 pgs.
Quick read regarding air travel, consisting of a lot of collage work and interesting brief real-life anecdotes about people who, be it for lack of funds, homelessness, or refugee status, live in airport lounges, oftentimes for a number of years. Such a strange and fascinating limbo to live in. The writing isn't particularly in-depth or detailed here, but some amazing fodder for your next tumble down a Wiki-hole. –Keith Rosson (2-7 Larch St., Ottawa, Ontario, Canada KIR6W4)

MAXIMUM ROCK'N'ROLL # 392, $4.99, 8½ x 11", newsprint, 112 pgs.
Plenty of decent stuff to check out in this January issue of *MRR*: an interview with Marco from Salinas Records; a piece on the unfortunate demise of Toronto's S.H.I.B.G.B.'s venue; Erika Elizabeth's "Futures and Pasts" column; other things. But the reason to go out of your way to track down this *MRR* from six months ago or whatever is Julaya Antolin's G.L.O.S.S. tour diary. Holy shit. Antolin nails all the absurdities and banalities of tour life, and since this is a tour with maybe the most visible LGBT hardcore band in our lifetime you also get a clear (if brief) view of both how liberating and how scary that can be. For every good crowd, cool regional band, and inspiring conversation, there's a sulking dude, threatening internet posts, or a warning about an upcoming city. Antolin's voice throughout the piece is fresh, insightful, and often hilarious. When I got to the part of the Bloomington, IN entry (in reference to an upcoming show in Louisville) that read "Apparently somebody called us a band of faggots or something, which is unsurprising in this fuckin' weird corn world," I think I cackled. What do you do when you're a tough-as-shit band, everyone knows it, and you're dealing with submentals? You laugh and you keep going and maybe you play in a driveway because too many people came to the house show because your band rules and then someone stagedives off a compost bin. –Matt Werts (MRR, PO Box 460760, SF, CA, 94146, maximumrocknroll.com)

MAXIMUM ROCK'N'ROLL #394, $4.99, 8½" x 11", newsprint, 112 pgs.
The great thing about *Maximum Rock'n'roll* (or the great problem, depending on your perspective) is that they figured out their brand a long, long time ago and have stuck with it. You know what you're getting with this: *MRR* plunges into some of the darkest recesses of the rock'n'roll underbelly and brings out those hobgoblins for all to know and love. This issue features interviews with Scumraid, Cold Beat, Clocked Out, Darfür, the Landlords, Utah Jazz, and Constant Insult. Also featured is a scene report from the United Arab Emirates. Enjoy! –The Lord Kveldulfr (PO Box 460760, SF, CA 94146-0760)

MISHAP #34, $2 or trade, 8½" x 11", copied, 48 pgs.
This issue collects interviews from Latino hardcore band La Armada from Chicago (by way of the Dominican Republic), Juggling Jugulars from Finland, and the bands Novelas and Not A Part of It from the writer Ryan's hometown of Eugene, OR. There is also a chat with Anna Vo who helped organize a "Punx of Color"-centered festival in Portland called Intersect Fest, and an interview/primer on women's-oriented self-defense with founders of the women's self-defense group Warrior Sisters. The overwhelmingly inclusive and positive vibe that Ryan makes an effort to promote in his writing makes this a pretty engaging read. Appropriately enough, he kicks off this issue with an essay where he reflects at a recent 7 Seconds' show on punk's longevity and efforts to strive for positive changes. I highly approve of the La Armada and Juggling Jugular's interviews that exposed me to these pretty furious-sounding bands for the first time. Seriously, look up the La Armada Bandcamp page. That is some high-grade hardcore. –Adrian Salas (Mishap, PO Box 5841, Eugene, OR 97405, mishapzine@yahoo.com)

NEW WAVE CHICKEN #1, $5, 5½ x 8½", copied, 44 pgs.
In all my years reviewing zines, I don't think I've ever come across one from Hawaii. It's cool to see they're doing them on the islands. It's even better that they're doing ones that are so well put together and interesting. Contrary to the title of the zine, it's not all just about chickens. While Steve, the author, is a chicken farmer, this issue focuses more on the new wave aspect of the title. He asked a bunch of his friends to share their experience with new wave and early punk music. I love reading how older punks, especially, got into the scene, so I enjoyed just about every page of this. Toward the end it got a little old, as some of the authors rambled and weren't as concise as they could've been. But, overall, this is a strong first issue. I'd love to read more. –Kurt Morris (PO Box 880081, Pukalani, HI 96788)

NO FRIENDS #2, $6.50, 5½" x 8½", newsprint, 120 pgs.
DIY, zine-inspired, radical, volunteer-run magazine *No Friends* gave me a lot of similar vibes to *Maximum Rock'n'roll* and this very periodical you're holding right now. Built on DIY ethics and a love of zine culture, *No Friends* features interviews with bands, album and zine reviews, live music photography, and short essays. What stood out to me, however, were the interviews with W. Kamau Bell and Red Light Legal. Having an interview with a comedian and a pro-bono legal service that specializes in the rights of sex workers was a really wonderful expansion on showing that radical culture can exist outside of the music scene. The magazine strives to include a wide variety of DIY culture and radical issues, *and* each issue of this Chicago-based magazine includes a flexi record with tracks not available online for immediate download, so you have to get the zine to get the music! I now have another punk periodical to add to my collection! –Tricia Ramos (No Friends, nofriendszine.com, nofriendszine@gmail.com, PO Box 12343, Chicago, IL, 60612)

PASAZER #32, 22 zloty 8 ½" x 11", offset, 208 pgs.
This zine is absolutely gorgeous: densely packed with reviews, interviews (among others, Poison Idea, Dezerter, and Inkwizycja—the latter has a great

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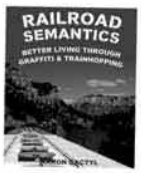

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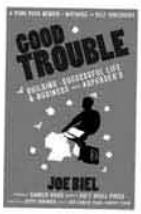

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song on the enclosed twenty-one track CD sampler) and articles (Henry joining Black Flag). I wish I understood Polish so I could read it. –Michael T. Fournier (PO Box 42, 39-201 Debica 3 Poland, pasazer.pl)

PUNK LIFE #56-57, $2, 5½" x 8½", copied, 44 pgs.
"I don't want to sound like a broken record," reads page two, "but the misdeeds of the National Park Service are front and center again." What's more, *Punk Life* is the first zine I've ever read that includes email transcripts—and lots of them. Need I say more? Just a bit. Lots of email transcripts per the National Mall and some good record reviews in the final seven pages or so. –Jim Joyce (Punk Life Zine, 2601 Sinclair Ave., Suite 9, Concord, CA, 94519)

PUNK ROCK GLEE CLUB, $2, 5½" x 8½", copied, 44 pgs.
Liz Mason, who writes the mighty fine perzine *Caboose* put together this mini-history of Chicago's Blue Ribbon Glee Club, an a cappella group that performs in bars, record stores, and mason clubs around town and country. I had to wonder, aside from this debut being an excellent scrapbook for the club itself, what's the point for the rest of us? Halfway through I got the feeling that it's more than a memento; there's a starter's guide in here, too—*PRGC* will be a germ for spreading such clubs to other cities and spinoffs in town, too. Inside, we hear the joys and creative challenges of the gig: how it's fun to bomb when "bombing with twenty other people means that we can all share the blame," to articulate the songs hidden inside songs (say, a solo in "Kiss Me Deadly"), and to be in a band without lugging around equipment. Mason's zine is lo-fi life-affirming—upbeat, inclusive, and inspiring—in the way that DIY can be when it finally catches its stride. My review is sentimental, but I swear to you I've had only one beer in the duration of typing. Boozy or not, I suggest you glug the sweet taste of your choosing and cruise Youtube for BRGC vids. "California Über Alles" is a good start. Ten videos later, I'm gnashing my teeth for missing the night the club sang X's crown of songs, "The World's a Mess" at that bar where the owner smashes his own chairs. Such is life. Get *Punk Rock Glee Club* #1 and get cooking on your own a cappella chapter. –Jim Joyce (Liz Mason, PO Box 477553, Chicago, IL 60647, CabooseZine@gmail.com, LizMasonIsAwesome.com)

SEVEN INCHES TO FREEDOM #13, $3.50, 5½" x 8½", offset, 36 pgs.
SITF writer Joe Lachut puts it best in his preamble: "Punk zines kind of exist in a vacuum to me and act as a time capsule. The interviews are a bit old, but the time lapse doesn't hurt them any." At the older end of things are Lachut's interview with the '90s hardcore group Halfman, and a refreshingly anecdotal section on "The Best Hardcore Bands You've Forgotten About." My favorite pieces in *SITF* were about the culture around the music. There's a fun interview with Adam P. of Viper Video, a VHS distro out of L.A. that sells recordings of recent punk shows, video zines, and miscellaneous wild shit. In our digital age of Bluetooth rays shootin' through our gunk at all hours of the day and night, I welcome Joe's celebration of the unexpected, to me, corners of DIY news, especially his conversation with one of Cleveland's finest, Emmy, author the fantastic *Cretins of Distortion* zine. (My pick for the gem of *SITF* #13.) In it, Emmy gives the lowdown on the loss of the Staple's copy code—a memo went out to employees, "THERE HAS BEEN A SECURITY BREACH AND ALL COPIERS [sic] PASSWORDS MUST BE CHANGED!"—praises the Midwest, and unrolls the gospel zine truth: "paying full price for copies is the real crime and no zine maker should ever do it!" Issue #13 is dedicated to the late Travis Fristoe, wonderful author of the zine, *America?* and creator of much else. "Times are ugly, confused, and hectic," Joe muses, and while that's true, one crawls away from *Seven Inches to Freedom* feeling revitalized. –Jim Joyce (Joe Lachut, PO Box 457, Ft. Meyers, Fl, 33902)

'WHAT'S UP, GRIM?' HAUNTED HAYRIDERS IN THEIR OWN WORDS, $8, 5½" x 8½", copied, 54 pgs.
Deep inside this all-black, glossy-finished zine lays real quotes from riders of a Haunted Hayride in New Jersey. Recorded by the Grim Reaper (our writer), readers get a glimpse into the humans of the tri-state area and their reactions to riding this hayride. Ranging from little kids around eight years old to adults as old as sixty-five; the children's reactions always seem innocent enough, while the teen girls do a lot of asking the Grim Reaper out or telling him he's hot. Also included are black and white photos of the spooky employees of the attraction, dressed to kill (sorry I had to). –Tricia Ramos (ginkner.bigcartel.com)

WHATEVER #3, $4, 5½" x 8½", copied, 32 pgs.
A femme-identifying anthology zine. This issue focuses on body positivity and deconstructing self-hate. Contributors submitted art, short stories, and poetry all having to do with our bodies, which makes this zine an introspective look into how the media and society forces beauty ideals on us everyday. My favorite part was one contributor's track list of songs to make you feel "body posi." –Tricia Ramos (Whatever, etsy.com/shop/thehandandtheart)

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SORESPOT
SEWERAGE
Sorespot
Sewerage
SORESPOT is a CHICAGO 4-piece w/ mbr of CANADIAN RIFLE outputting a unique blend of noisy LO-FI ALT PUNK. Dual female / male vocals take a back seat to loud guitars and catchy melodies. At times more atmospheric, Sorespot's music is a welcomed addition to CHICAGO'S growing list of locals attempting to differentiate.
AMERICA'S BADDEST BAND
Bad Mechanics
DEMO 2015
Bad Mechanics
Demo 2015
BAD MECHANICS are a lo-fi scatter-brain punk two piece from CHICAGO made up of former mbrs of GALACTIC CANNIBAL and HEWHOCORRUPTS. Think DEVO, NO MEANS NO, and THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS and you'll probably get something close to BAD MECHANICS. BAD MECHANICS' debut release "DEMO 2015" is a four song demo tape w/ drop card LIMITED TO 100.
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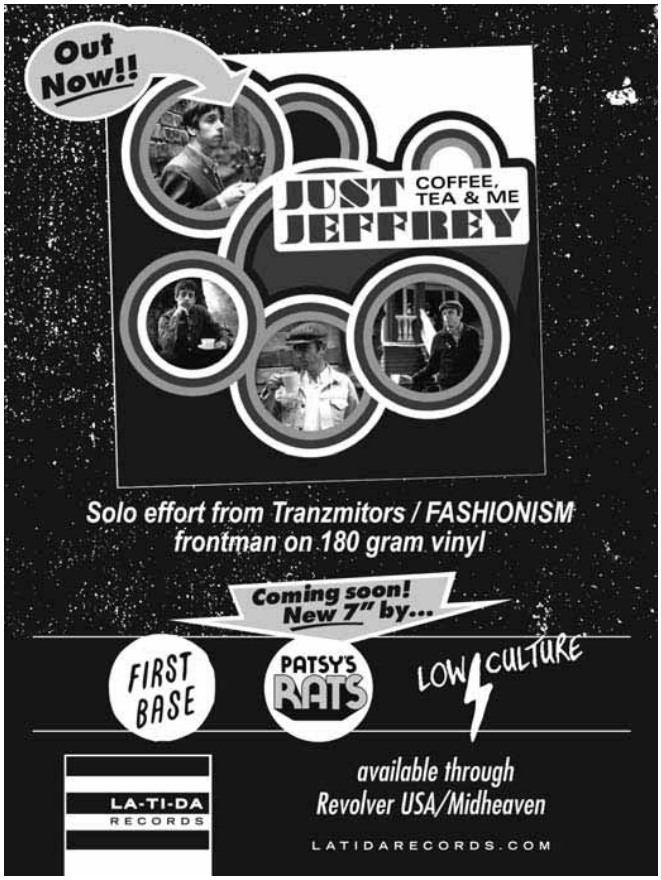

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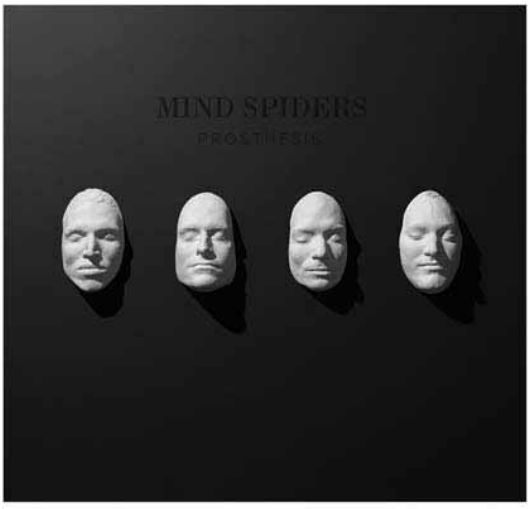

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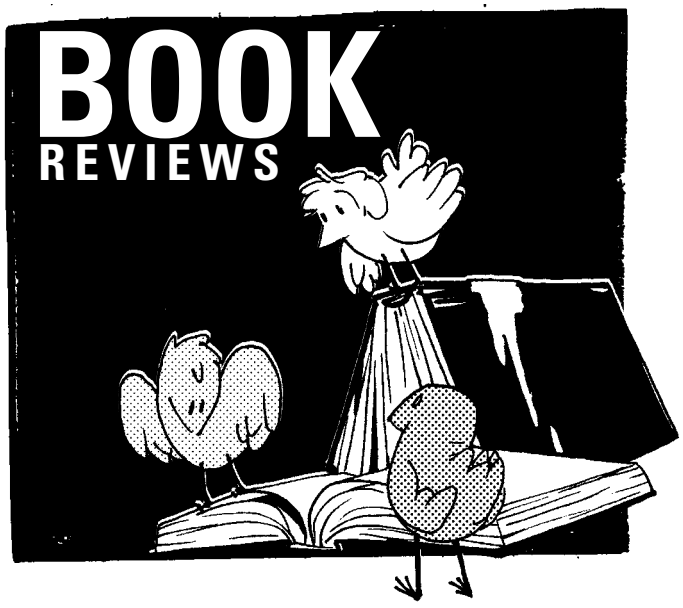

Big Shiny Prison, The: Volume 1
By Ryan Bartek, 484 pgs.

The unfortunate heart of this tome lies on page 391, in a how-to on touring band life. The section is titled "Maintain The Illusion At All Costs," and the passage in question reads: "the random individual automatically assumes you are bigger then (sic) you actually are because you're on tour. Let them believe what they will… (e)ven though you know you're a shit-head, they think you're Captain Cool, and it will be all worth it in the end when they call their friends the next day."

> **Despite all the experience, all the words and pages, remarkably little is said.**
>
> –Michael T. Fournier, ***Big Shiny Prison, The: Volume 1***

It's funny, because the almost four hundred pages that precede this passage— and the hundred after it—feel like the author taking his own advice. This book, the first of several installments, recounts Ryan Bartek's nine months on the road, on busses and on tour, all the adventures he has, all the people and bands he talks to and interviews. But despite all the experience, all the words and pages, remarkably little is said.

Travelogue is a well-trod formula and through the lens of punk rock, something new might be added to the recipe. And while Bartek takes more care with his prose than a lot of self-published authors, there's not enough fresh material (or even hot takes) to sustain concentrated reading. Yeah, part of this is the nature of the narrative—travel means a succession of ideas, images, people—but for all the Hunter Thompson and Kerouac namedrops, all the mentions of "the underground," there's remarkably little here that's new or innovative. Some of it's interesting, don't get me wrong, such as Bartek's interview with Columbine survivor Eric Parsons, but this book is a slog.

Too often the author seems to be struggling to figure out who he's addressing. The book begins with a sort of primer about punk and metal which feels mansplain-y, and continues, later, with the tour rules I quoted above (which also contains such gems as, "You'll have opportunities here and there. BE CAREFUL. If she isn't a mega-slut that's fucked everyone in town she's going to leave comments all over your MySpace page and your REAL girlfriend will find out."). Is this addressed to the "underground" community? I think by the end he's talking only to himself.

With editing, with careful consideration of which bands' interviews to include, this book may have been salvageable. Alas, it's a mess. With that said, don't take my word for it: *The Big Shiny Prison, Volume 1* is available as a free PDF on the author's web page. Check it out for yourself. –Michael T. Fournier (bigshinyprison.com)

Good Trouble: Building a Successful Life and Business with Asperger's
By Joe Biel, 222 pgs.

Joe Biel's autobiography serves two functions: Biel's personal history as seen through the twin lenses of an evolving punk ideology and an Asperger's syndrome diagnosis, and a history of Microcosm publications. The book follows Biel's life from his troubled childhood in the Cleveland suburb of Mentor, Ohio, where he was born in the late 1970s, up to the present. Biel grounds his early personal life by examining the historical and familial environmental factors which exerted influence over his upbringing and led to his eventual discovery of punk culture.

There are many difficulties in Joe's early life, such as his father's incapacitating stroke and navigating several broken educational systems. As a constant source of discord and intimate violence, Joe's domineering mother is portrayed as especially pushing Joe deeper into punk as a self-created family structure in which he could take solace and find support in zines and music in ways that his biological family life often failed him. In finding punk rock, Joe takes to heart the DIY mentality and founds Microcosm in his teens to put out the zines (and occasional records early on) that he feels deserve to be out in the world to hopefully inspire others.

Later in life, Joe is diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome. Joe's extremely rocky relationship with his ex-wife and business associate, Jennifer, is often held up as a barometer of how difficult his experiences with autistic spectrum disorders often made his life. A large part of the book becomes an interesting exercise by Joe in re-contextualizing his past through the filter of autistic spectrum tendencies and behaviors. He judges the impacts they have had on him.

Tracing the evolution of Microcosm as a business is the most fascinating part of the book. Joe chronicles the many ups and downs the company goes through. He starts with how Microcosm was a one-man operation that largely consisted of some zines distro-ed out of some cardboard boxes. He then shifts to the failed utopian project of operating as a cooperative with several full-time workers across two states with equal ownership stakes. Eventually he consolidates the company back into a more traditionally structured business back under his leadership. The book offers an informative look into the workings of a DIY company attempting to function, grow, and thrive under a punk rubric. It is to the book's strength that much of the business insights are offered as descriptive chronicles of how Microcosm was doing, whether good or bad, at each point in Joe's life, rather than being a book of prescriptive "business advice & secrets" that often sounds like fodder for the clearance rack. –Adrian Salas (Microcosm Publishing, 2752 N Williams Ave., Portland, OR 97227, microcosmpublishing.com)

Good Trouble: Building a Successful Life and Business with Asperger's
By Joe Biel, 222 pgs.

Full disclosure: I don't know Joe Biel, the author of this book, but I am acquainted with a number of the people about whom he writes. That being said, anyone in the zine scene in the past twenty years knows of Microcosm. For many years they were the largest zine distro out there. A lot has changed with Microcosm and founder Joe Biel, though. He recounts all of that experience (and then some) in his memoir *Good Trouble.*

Biel shares about growing up in Cleveland at the hands of an abusive mother in what sounds like a horrible upbringing under her verbal assault, belittling her husband (largely incapacitated by a stroke), Joe, and his sister. In his teens, Biel discovers punk rock and his life is changed. About this same time he also discovers zines and soon starts distributing them at punk shows around Cleveland. *Good Trouble* spends a fairly large time exploring the growth and difficulties of what it takes to go from a small-time zine distro to a successful DIY publisher.

Good Trouble also recounts Biel's difficult relationship with women (including his ex-wife), as well as his co-workers at Microcosm, and eventually splitting the company in two, with Microcosm now focused primarily on publishing books and less on distributing zines. Through the course of the book, Biel begins to understand his difficulties with others

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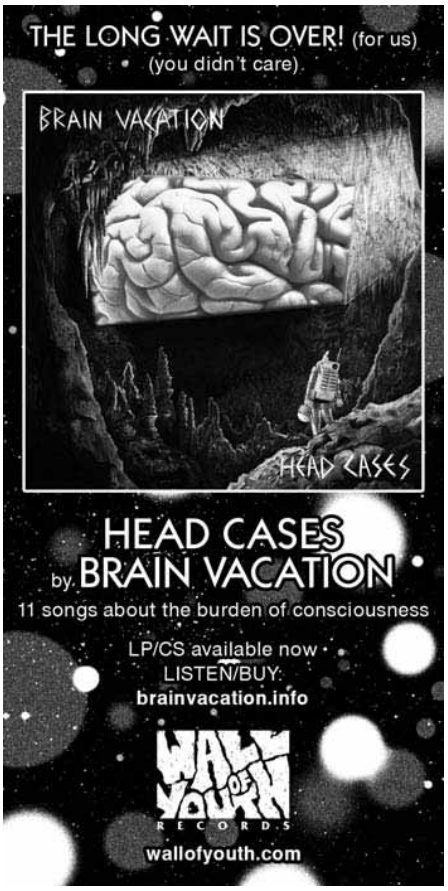
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REF-22 BOX FAN "SECRET PASSIONS" First full-length from Olympia's "apartment rock" duo (now with more Kat!)
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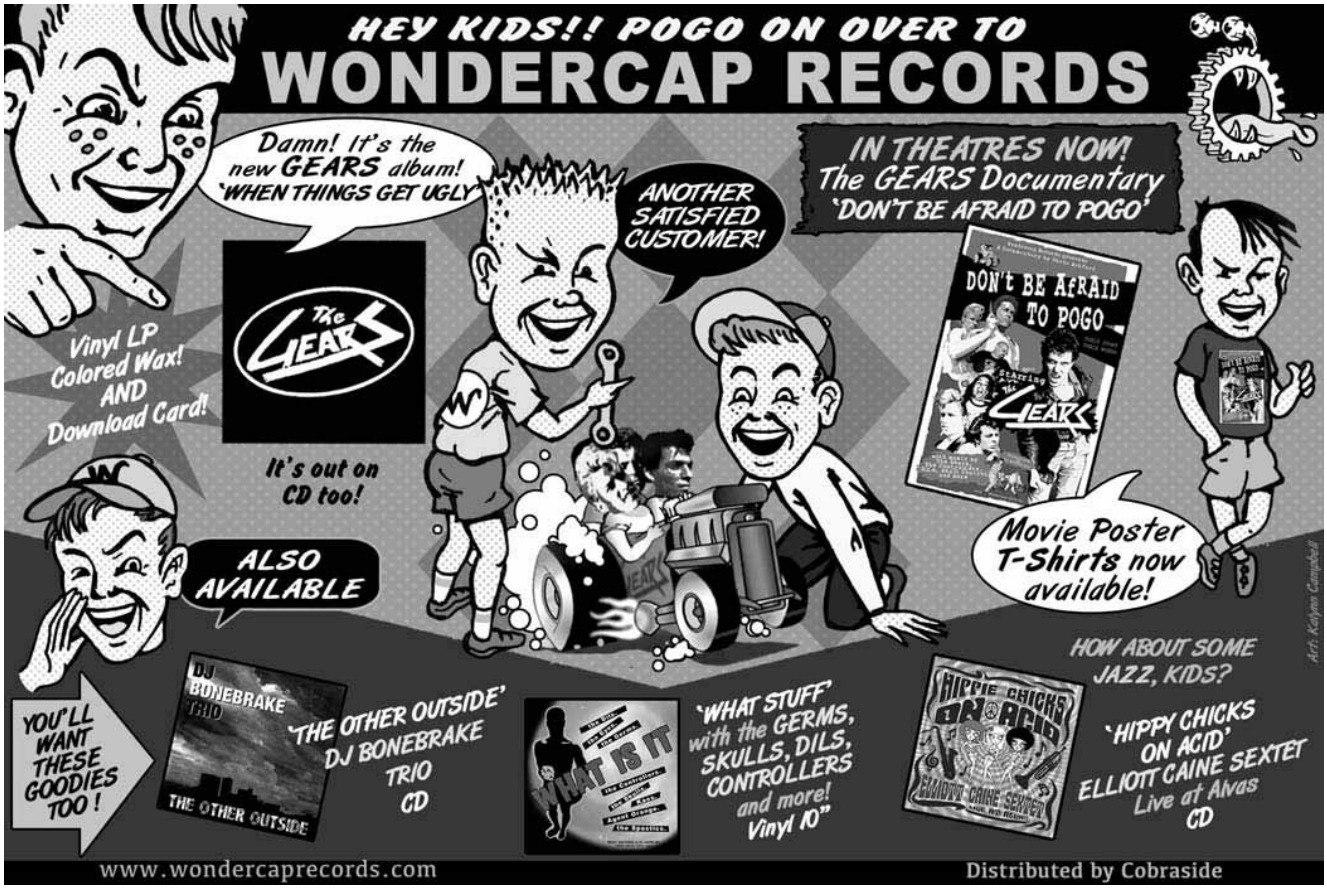
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IN THEATRES NOW! The GEARS Documentary 'DON'T BE AFRAID TO POGO'
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are due to his undiagnosed (until the age of thirty-two) Asperger's. It's with this understanding that he begins to reflect on his relationships.

It's interesting to read about the development of a well-known indie publishing company, and for those interested in that type of thing (which includes myself), they'll find this worth a read. However, *Good Trouble* also suffers from a number of problems. The mark of a good memoir is the ability to use the "show, don't tell" method. This work is almost entirely a litany of, "I did this, then this happened, and after that I went and did this." This takes away the possibility to genuinely experience Biel's life. It made some of the reading tedious, especially when Biel throws in excessive detail about events that do nothing to push forward the narrative of his life with Asperger's.

As many in the zine scene know, Biel has a history of accusations of abuse from former employees and his ex-wife. He writes about those experiences in his memoir in great depth. It's obvious that there are hurt feelings on both sides, but so much of the book smacks of "setting the record straight," which is a horrible motivation in writing a memoir. In doing so, it takes away from any ability to truly identify with Biel's struggles with Asperger's and how he overcame it.

As it stands, this is an interesting read for those wanting to know Biel's take on the history of Microcosm, but his inability to stay focused on that and tell it in a meaningful way makes this a flawed work. –Kurt Morris (Microcosm, 2752 N. Williams Ave., Portland, OR 97227)

Locust House: A Novella
By Adam Gnade, 48 pgs.

Adam Gnade's latest novella, *Locust House,* is set in San Diego in 2002. I had been there a year earlier for the first and only time. It was a graduation gift from my parents. We went together. I was severely depressed and didn't really feel like being there, especially with my parents. But the sun was appreciated, there was good Mexican food, and I went to a show at the Casbah with a San Diego friend.

I knew there was a music scene in the city, anchored by bands like the Locust and the record label 31g—screamy, crazy hardcore that would melt your face. White belts, Spock haircuts, and tight jeans. I would never fit in fashion-wise, but could relate to the bursts of energy. I had friends in a similar-sounding band in Indiana, which I called home.

But the Locust was the original. They put out songs with weird titles like "Moth-eaten Deer Head" and "Skin Graft at Seventy-Five Miles Per Hour." They had a three-inch CD. They wore bug suits when they played live and their sets lasted fifteen minutes, tops. I couldn't comprehend them, but I knew that was a good thing.

Adam Gnade has written a novella that tells the story of a house show—the last night for the house before the residents are evicted. But this isn't the story of the members of the house or the Locust. It's about Agnes's day as well as the experience leading up to the show of James, Frances, and Tyler. It's about that moment when we were younger and more intense. House shows were spectacles and often got broken up by the police—before we grew up and got tired and jaded.

The decision to explore punk and what it means to the author through a fictional lens of a house show is insightful and smart, primarily because anyone in punk has been there. And when there is a punk house where the residents are throwing one last party before they leave, it makes it all that much bigger. The fact that Gnade focuses on a show in San Diego featuring the Locust, Blood Brothers, De Facto, and Moving Units makes it even greater. These are bands I was in tune with in 2002, when the story is told.

Perhaps cutting out Agnes's scenes earlier in the day and adding more meat to the immediate period before and after the show (as well as more details of the show) would've made this novella even more intense. But I can still dig it. I may not have been in San Diego for any such show, but I most certainly lived this experience. Gnade *was* in San Diego at the time and overall does a solid job expressing what it was like for us who couldn't experience this (fictional) moment in time. –Kurt Morris (Three One G, PO Box 178262, San Diego, CA 92177)

Railroad Semantics: Train Hopping Across Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, California, and Oregon
By Aaron Dactyl, 96 pgs.

The life of a traveling kid is a simple one. The layer of filth on your skin is a badge of honor and everything you need to survive is meant to be carried on your back. Only the absolute essentials make the cut. I lived this way for five years of my twenties. I'm guessing this kid counted a thesaurus among those essential things. I had a hard time getting past the first few pages on account of having to stop and look up every other adjective the author had chosen in his flowery descriptions. I'm no slouch when it comes to the English language, but some choices in the wording made it a tedious read. Beyond that, the author, Aaron Dactyl, also uses a lot of technical language, slang, and terminology that—if you are not familiar with the subject—would make this read confusing.

If you are interested in this subject, I suggest starting with a book called *Hopping Freight Trains in America* by Duffy Littlejohn. It's probably the most comprehensive train hopping how-to book. It also explains how the industry works and gives an excellent recounting of the history of the railroad in America. All of that aside, this compilation of zines makes me long for a simpler time in my life. While in practice I was way more successful as a hitchhiker than a train hopper, there are plenty of similarities in lifestyle, and the characters you encounter. I really enjoyed the recounts of Aaron's journeys. You might, too! –Jackie Rusted (Microcosm Publishing, 2752 N Williams Ave., Portland, OR 97227, microcosmpublishing.com)

I should mention that the book features a lot of images of naked guys.
–Jim Woster, *True Homosexual Experiences*

True Homosexual Experiences
By William E. Jones, 220 pgs.

Like William Burroughs, Boyd McDonald was what writer William E. Jones calls an "Ivy League fuck-up." A Harvard graduate who went on to work for *Time* magazine and IBM, he eventually opted to live in a single-room-occupancy (SRO) hotel in Manhattan and publish a series of chapbooks that collected contributors' stories about their homosexual experiences. The series was titled *Straight to Hell*—the title was ironic, as McDonald was gay and, for much of his life, promiscuous. The earliest copy of the chapbook that Jones could find was published in 1973 and the series continued until the '90s.

The title *Straight to Hell* also uses "straight" as a double-entendre—sex with an ostensibly straight guy was the prize, like sex with a beautiful, competed-for woman is the prize for straight guys. One reader sent in a photo of some of his high school basketball teammates from the '50s, detailing what he did with the guys wearing jersey numbers thirty-one, five and twenty-five.

For one issue, McDonald interviewed a long-haul trucker:

Are there "types"—that is, types of truckers that prefer one kind of sex? *Definitely ... [Bullhaulers] love to fuck a guy's hole raw ... Tank drivers generally like to suck or get sucked. ... Milk runners aren't usually too good, because they're mostly local runs and the guys don't get hot enough, but I've met some who are good. The long-distance gasoline drivers are good. They're the best cocksuckers and love having their cocks gobbled. Produce haulers are usually anal, for some reason...*

I know what you're probably thinking, but Jones makes a strong case that McDonald had no need to fabricate anything.

As a whole, *True Homosexual Experiences* is for the devoted aficionado of gay history. Jones' writing can frequently be described as academic. (Or maybe I'm just saying that because at length Jones compares McDonald's work to Menippean satire, and I didn't know what that was.) But mosaically, the book offers a picture of gay American sexuality in the twentieth century. Though since McDonald was a hermit in his 60s when the HIV/AIDS crisis hit, Jones doesn't have occasion to address the crisis much.

And I should mention that the book features a lot of images of naked guys. –Jim Woster (We Heard You Like Books, weheardyoulikebooks.com)

Dicks from Texas, The: DVD

One summer Sunday in 1984 following a (San Francisco/Lynn Perko-era) Dicks show in Oshkosh, Wis., some other locals and I were hanging out with the Dicks in a park on Lake Winnebago, and came upon a party hosted by a local hair salon. The party featured free beer and a rockabilly band; we consumed the first item heartily, and, when the second item had concluded their tour of duty, we somehow talked all parties concerned into letting the Dicks play an impromptu set on the rockabilly band's equipment. A makeshift slam pit broke out somewhere around the picnic tables, and, as I stood at the front of the stage, a local oaf sailed into me from behind, driving me down to one knee. As the area in front of the makeshift stage area was loose stones, and I was wearing my rippiest pair of Ramones knee-hole jeans, this forced genuflection rent my knee asunder; blood poured everywhere. Utilizing the direct pressure method, I was soon able to bring things under control by pressing my hand on my knee, but the result of this self-administered first aid was that the palm of my hand was a bloody red mess. Not wishing to let a good bloody red mess go to waste, I lifted my hand in the air in an appropriately ridiculous wrestling gesture, and, as Gary Floyd sang on obliviously, THWAP!!!—I put a bloody red handprint smack dab in the middle of his kisser. Bloodied but not to be undone, Gary then began to lick the remaining blood off of my hand, as the band played merrily onward. This free exchange of bodily fluids remains, arguably, *the punkest thing I've ever done in my life.* This anecdote doesn't have all that much to do with this film, really, but I just like telling the story. To this day, I know people whose favorite band remains the Dicks, and whose favorite record is *Kill from the Heart.* Obviously, much of the appeal is based in the mold-breaking character of frontman Gary Floyd, a huge gay dude who wore dresses and Mao buttons (and the occasional bloody handprint) in Texas in the late '70s and early '80s, back when such antics were mindblowingly radical. Needless to say, this documentary—the usual assemblage of talking heads, live footage, and vintage photos—is bolstered greatly by a continual stream of awesome Gary Floyd pics, as visual a frontman as they come. On the downside, there are a number of interviews conducted in bars that aren't miked particularly well; bits of the dialogue were occasionally lost on me, although I did enjoy the way the Austin scene circa 1980 came across as a bunch of friends, who, to this day, are comfortable day-drinking together in bars. Other minor quibbles include the jerky editing of some interview scenes, and the absence of menu music. Get Dicked, kids. Get Dicked. –Rev. Nørb (MVD Visual, mvdvisual.com, thedicksfromtexas.com)

**Get Dicked, kids.
Get Dicked.**

–Rev. Nørb, *The Dicks from Texas*

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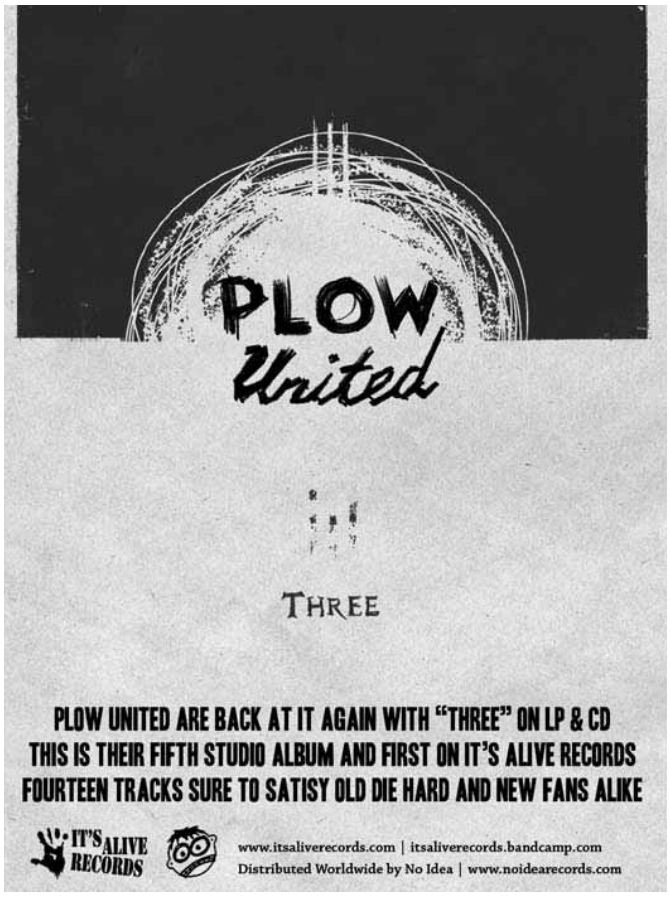
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